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#138

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## COVER

Our "Halloween Greetings" cover is the first DRAGON® Magazine cover from Jeff Easley, whose work should be familiar to any longtime gamers. It is also the first cover acquisition made by Lori Svikel, our new art director. Jeff admits that he collects antique Halloween items; he certainly has a feel for the topic.

# LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR UK Limited, The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD, United Kingdom.

## Next index?

Dear Dragon:

Will you ever consider a separate index of past reviews of books and games? When do you expect a follow-up index to your Ultimate Article Index?

Matthew Pritchard  
Houston TX

*We used to index the items that were reviewed in DRAGON Magazine, but discontinued that practice as time went on (and the number of things to index grew longer). Time will tell whether we index the titles of reviewed books and games.*

*We are considering several options for publishing another index for DRAGON Magazine. We could either create a yearly index, to be published each December, or a cumulative index that would either appear every so often in the June anniversary issue (as has been done before), as a separate booklet, or in a future Best of DRAGON Magazine anthology. Designing such an index, however, would be a difficult and time-consuming task, and we're not sure how soon we'll be able to get to it. We will make an effort to have an index created and published by the end of 1989 — but we cannot make any promises!*

## More errors

Dear Dragon:

I am writing to point out two mistakes I found while reading DRAGON issue #136. The first mistake I found was in the article "A Room for the Knight," in Table 1, Inn Prices. According to this table, a four-star inn costs 5 gp to stay there for one night, yet it only costs 15 sp to stay there one night *and* get a meal. The second mistake I found was in the "Long Arm of the Law." The very first sentence in the article starts, "DRAGON issue #155 printed many thief-orientated articles . . ." But this was printed in the new issue, #136. DRAGON issue #155 is not due out for another year and a half. Would you please clear up these two mistakes?

Jeff Darby  
Lawrence KS

*The first line under "Lodging" in Table 1 from "A Room for the Knight" should have read "1 night without meal." The second line should have read "1 night with meal." The weekly and monthly lodging prices reflect discounts offered*

*for prolonged visits, with meals. All prices are, of course, subject to change as the DM desires, and are offered only as guidelines.*

*The reference to issue #155 should have been to issue #115, the November 1986 issue.*

## Some last words

Dear Dragon:

After reading your article "The Last Word" in issue #129 and Cliff Frazier's sequel to that article in #134, I thought of other suggestions to include in the sequel's sequel. These are:

"It's probably just another gas spore."  
"Who's the chick with the spiders?"  
"No, you go on without me."  
"Without Mjolnir, I'll bet you're a real wimp."  
"What's that up ahead?"  
"C'mon guys, let's show him who's boss."  
"Why is it so dark in here?"  
"He's probably only first level."  
"I'll try to talk to it."  
"It's just another illusion."  
"I think it's dead."  
"Let's split up."  
"I'll walk up to the dragon invisibly."  
"Why is that man performing sign language?"  
"Don't be so paranoid."

Daniel Watson  
Plattsburgh NY

## And some more...

Dear Dragon:

With respect to "The Last Word," I have come up with a few myself:

"The dragon's asleep!"  
"How much damage do I take?"  
"They won't kill us if we surrender."  
"I'm opening the chest."  
"Those stairs sure look slippery."  
"What does green slime taste like?"  
"Hey, look — archers!"  
"Spikes in the bottom of a chest — how weird!"  
"I'll dive in with full plate on."  
"How many are there?"  
"I'll snap the staff!"  
"That's no mage!"  
"Did you ever see so many teeth?"  
"It says 'healing' on the label."  
"I'll turn the 43 vampires!"  
"Neat! A cave entrance that looks like a mouth!"

"I'm going to open the door, push the third book to the left on the bottom shelf, enter the secret room, open the chest, take out the 3,142 gold pieces, put on the ring of animal control in the false bottom, and control the snake I find under the box. Pretty good guess, huh?"

Darrell Anderson  
Elma NY

## Souvenirs

The GEN CON®/ORIGINS™ 1988 Game Fair is safely over. Your magazine staff members acquired a number of items from the convention for their services:

An ORIGINS Special Award for Outstanding Achievement (1987) for DRAGON® Magazine;

A dozen new colorful buttons, including "Veni, Vidi, VISA" ("I came, I saw, I went shopping"), "Oh, no, not another learning experience!" and the rather appropriate "100,000 lemmings can't be wrong!";

Copies of the now-infamous WOOF MEOW role-playing game of cats and dogs gone bad (with magic system — I am not making this up) and the lurid MACHO WOMEN WITH GUNS role-playing game of . . . well . . . ahem;

The keys to the display booth, which I had to return on an emergency drive back to MECCA on Wednesday night (sorry, Mike);

Converted new SPACE: 1889™ game T-shirts from the Game Designer's Workshop booth (thanks, Marc);

A chance to see the 22,986,375 playing pieces inside each of the humongous BUCK ROGERS™ and DRAGONLANCE™ boardgames that sold so well at the booth;

A friendly wave from Margaret "Darksword" Weis, who also told visitors that the editor of this magazine was the one who threw the paper airplanes in the Hyatt and thus brought down the wrath of the hotel staff on the otherwise harmless game-industry party on Friday night (a completely untrue assertion; really, it wasn't me);

Several bags full of wonderful munchies from the Ambrosia chocolate works (just a couple of blocks from MECCA), where the air was so thick with chocolate you could hardly breathe;

Fond memories of the good response we got from our seminars (thanks to all panel members and to those in the audience); and

The usual end-of-convention colds and exhaustion that debilitated the staff (as well as the rest of TSR, Inc.) for a week afterward.

It was worth it. Now, of course, there's next year. . . .

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MAGAZINE

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# FORUM

"Forum" welcomes your comments and opinions on role-playing games. In the United States and Canada, write to: Forum, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Forum, DRAGON Magazine, TSR UK Limited, The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD, United Kingdom. We ask that material submitted to "Forum" be either neatly written by hand or typed with a fresh ribbon and clean keys so we can read and understand your comments.

This letter is a little late because I have just started to use David Dennis's article on powered armor for STAR FRONTIERS® games in issue #129. My complaint concerns the armored combat resolution system, in which quite a bit of math is involved. When the combat starts, this system slows the fast-paced action of the game to a stop. I have revised the step-by-step combat system by eliminating step 2 in the article. The system I now use is this:

1. Roll to hit to see if the armored combatant is hit.
2. Check to see if each weapon penetrated the armor.
3. Roll 2d10 and add the weapon's number of dice damage that it causes. Record this sum.
4. Check on table 3A herein for each weapon, find its combat number, and subtract this amount from the sum in step 3.
5. Check the result on table 7 to see what damage has occurred.
6. Roll for damage, with the wearer taking one-half (or one-quarter, if a powerscreen effective against that weapon type is used).

I have added one new table to the ones in the article, in which all the protection percentages have already been divided by five and multi-

plied by two for fast combat resolution.

**Table 3A  
Powered Armor Protection**

Weapon type	Combat number
Laser	20
Sonic	24
Electroshunner	-
Bullet	28
Needler	-
Recoilless rifle	16
Gyrojet	22
Frag. grenade	18
Rocket launcher	14
Axe, knife, etc.	-
Electric sword	26
Spear or sword	34
Shock gloves	28
Stunstick	34
Guided missile	12
Flamethrower	36
Cannon	12
Howitzer	6
Bomb	8
Mine	20
ECM rifle	16

Finally, I decided that each suit is approximately .5 meters taller than the individual for which it was designed. Also, each empty suit of powered armor weighs approximately five times as much as the wearer.

Brian Estes  
Galatia IL

Over the years, several people have expressed a desire to create an experience-point system for thieves (see issue #135, page 43). Building on a previously suggested idea in an article from this magazine, I propose assigning a level of

difficulty (as per the experience-point chart in the DMG, page 35) to the building to be looted. For every 10' a building has, assign 1 HD, rounded to the lowest number.

Once the basic value is established, treat every guard or trap as one special ability. If you feel the guard or trap is especially tough, treat it as an exceptional ability. Proximity to strong support (e.g., the sheriff's office) or special construction (e.g., a greased tower wall) could also be treated as a special or exceptional ability. For every three secret receptacles for treasures (e.g., a hidden safe), add one more special ability, rounded to the lowest number. Then add the experience given for any treasure gained, adjusting for difficulty.

Using this system, a moneylender's 10'-high shop with four guards, three hidden treasure receptacles, a pit trap, and 500 gp in treasure would be worth 534 xp to a pair of 1st-level thieves escaping with the loot.

This system can also be converted to dungeon use, treating every 10' of depth as height.

Joseph Goldlust  
Caldwell NJ

As a player of the sport of paintball, I was dismayed to see the editor state in the editorial of issue #134 that he could understand how paintball games might be considered harmful. For your information, paintball has one of the best safety records of any popular sport. On the other hand, if you are viewing it in the same light as the antigun freaks who claim that playing with "guns" leads to violent behavior, then you are being just as ridiculous as those who claim that role-playing games lead to Satanism.

Also, with regard to the review of Oriental RPGs in the same issue, I am sick and tired of seeing ninjas portrayed as nothing more than evil, cutthroat assassins. In truth, they were forced to turn to stealth and assassination as their only means of defense against the vastly superior numbers of samurai who frequently raided their villages. Now, will someone please give the ninja the respect they deserve? And stop treating the samurai as such great and honorable guys. By today's standards, most of them were scum.

Mark Crane  
Edwardsville IL

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I've a few comments on Eric Oppen's article on Roman gods (issue #133). The first is simple. While it's true that the Celtic gods worshiped by druids are not a part of the Roman pantheon, it's also true that many Celts lived within the empire, at least after Julius Caesar annexed Gaul. Rome had a policy of not interfering with religions that didn't cause trouble, and druidic shrines would be located anywhere in the empire where Celts lived.

The other point is a bit more detailed. In his description of the goddess Eris, Eric Oppen correctly assigns her the alignment of chaotic neutral. He then has her put a number of rules upon her worshipers that would be more appropriate for a lawful-good goddess.

Eris is Chaos personified. While being chaotic can be interpreted as being an individual, it can also be meant as being chaotic (random), and a goddess of discord is more likely to have the latter version of the alignment than the former. But even if the former is used, I have a hard time envisioning her taking great efforts to punish her clerics who deal with demons.

The essence of chaotic neutrality is that individualism is a great thing, and good and evil are minor things in comparison. While I could see such a deity harboring a hatred of devils, modrons, devas, planetars, and solars, I can't see her think any worse of a chaotic-evil being like a demon than, "He's a little mean, but what the hey — if we were exactly alike, we'd be boring" (unless that demon had foolishly managed to offend her, in which case a specific demon would swiftly be annihilated).

S. D. Anderson  
Whittier CA

I think RPGs are entering a "settling down" period. The future stress will not be on new game systems, but rather on strengthening current systems. For the first time in the RPGs' history, the number of new players will taper off (due to shifts of taste in the public). Established players will age as a population and will also have greater levels of disposable income. Thus, I think the future will hold an expanded market for supplements designed to complement an existing game. The market has been saturated with campaign settings, most of which are more or less mutually exclusive. (Who has time to adventure across both Krynn and Oerth, not to mention the Forgotten Realms?) As players become comfortable with one setting, they are less apt to purchase others. If they do, it is probably more for ideas than anything else. Thus, the most successful game companies of the future will cater to the generic campaign, selling products any DM can use in any campaign (e.g., TSR's REF3 *The Book of Lairs*). Of course, the second-edition AD&D game is likely to spark new interest in RPGs and bring in many new players. Yet, I see an overall trend toward serving the established player.

While major efforts should probably be in the direction of satisfying this established clientele, new players should still be sought. This can be accomplished by maintaining a high visibility (more conventions, charity events, and — most importantly — press coverage). Direct confrontation with Bible Belt groups should be avoided. Just keep producing fine products and let them scream. Any press is good press. Total parental approval could destroy the new player market as much as anything; the D&D game should keep its rebellious edge. On the other hand, a marketing campaign aimed at the older player could help in making the D&D game an "acceptable" pastime for "adults." Another market that

needs to be targeted is the female consumer. If the D&D game can establish itself with women of all ages, its future is secured.

While I have only mentioned the D&D game by name, other RPGs certainly will be a major part of the future market. Yet in the public's mind, RPGs and the D&D game are synonymous. Something should be done to correct this; the emergence of "Party Games" might be an avenue to open new RPG markets.

Overall, I feel the main emphasis should be on established players. Flexible, multisystem products of high quality are the way to go.

Jeffrey M. Carey  
Chicago IL

Today, I decided to peruse through a stack of DRAGON Magazines to read some "Forum" letters. Lately, the big thing has been magic-users. When Mr. Gygax wrote the game, he knew that the magic-user at 1st level was laughably weak, and he tells us so in the *Players Handbook*. But if anyone were to bother to look at the future of the class, he would notice that after a while it takes surprisingly few experience points to rise in levels. As soon as the magic-user hits a high-enough level, a third-level *fireball* or *lightning bolt* will outshine the party's warriors. Besides, when it comes to weapons, a magician only carries a weapon to defend himself, so why not have only one weapon?

Just because a magic-user can't fry Orcus's brains out at 1st level is no reason to condemn the class. I believe another "Forum" writer supports me when I say that the magician is, because of his greater age (as per the *DMG*) and all of his studying, the most learned of any of the other characters, and will usually have the highest intelligence. Surely he will be the best at trying to deal with zealous arresting officers, trying to discover if the party's contact is lying, or debating whether a known assassin should join the party. A magic-user must also have a fairly high dexterity, so he might be the best at helping the thief pick a lock or something along those lines.

A. Patrick Connery  
Burlington ND

This letter concerns what I feel is a tendency of the AD&D game to favor good-aligned player characters over evil ones. To begin with, it seems that most people hold it to be true that only a few people enjoy evil PCs over good ones. It seems to be the opposite to me because all my friends who play AD&D games play evil characters; so do I. But we have to put up with all sorts of restrictions. Cavaliers who turn evil become hated by their own kind and lose some of their special abilities. Evil clerics must use the reversed forms of their curative spells, and they encounter all sorts of problems because this style tends to be weaker than the standard "good" style. And why can't PCs play evil paladins? Doesn't Orcus need a strong champion as much as Tyr? The only evil PC class, the assassin, will not exist in the revised rules. And modules that contain adventures for evil characters do not exist. After you change a module to accommodate evil characters, it barely resembles the product that you bought.

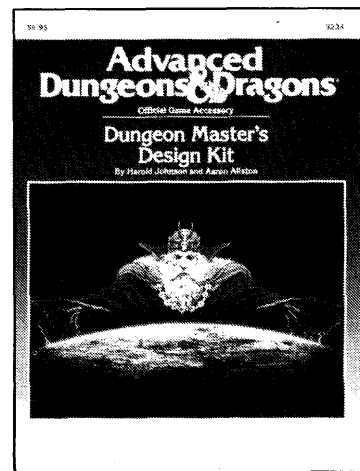
*Legends & Lore* (page 2) states "evil power is only represented as a foe for the forces of good to strive against and to crush." Why must this be so? I do not want the game to become biased in favor of evil, but I think that in the revised rules something should be done to make evil characters more compatible. Keep the assassin, and

Continued on page 86



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by Jeanne McGuire

# Through the Looking Glass



After and before: A skeletal guard in its finished state and with flat white primer alone. Photos by Roger E. Moore.

*Put a little death in your painting*

*The intrepid band of adventurers pressed on into the depths of the long-lost tomb of Khemon-Pha.*

*heroes realized that several of the skeletons lying in state were moving — and were armed.*

*shattered bones of their undead assailants lay scattered about the crypt. Dess, a mage of great renown,*

*we have fought strange foes,” he reported. “See — the chests of these skeletons*

*limbs have no joints. Only with powerful magic could they have been made to move at all!”*

Huh? What’s this with solid skeletons? Skeletons are supposed to be skeletal, right? Aren’t yours? Mine are — now.

Both as a game master and miniatures painter, I have always had a special fascination with the undead. Skeletons have long been a personal favorite. Dozens of them prowl my dungeons and workbench. (On special occasions, I line them up in front of the TV and show them videotapes of the great Ray Harryhausen animated skeletons.) Over the years, I have come up with a simple and sure-fire technique for quick and easy paintings of properly skeletal skeletons, and variations on it to deal with liches, zombies, ghosts, ghouls, and other horrors.

Most people, especially beginning painters, paint a skeleton in a sequence of steps resembling the following: trim the obvious flash (little bits of metal from imperfections in the mold) from the figure; paint it white; paint little black lines to indicate gaps between the bones; then, sic it on innocent adventurers.

The problem with this technique is that it tends to produce rather coarse-looking results. Even with a 5/0 brush, it is difficult to paint even, regular lines between the bones, especially ribs. At least, I can’t

do it; even trying gives me eyestrain and cramped hands, and filling in the gaps with a wash gives only dirty bones. The technique described in this article works for me, shaky hands and all, and gives professional-looking results as well. It takes a bit more preparation than the method given earlier, but the actual work is easier. I can paint six or eight of the little fellows in under an hour.

## Tools of the trade

You will need the following materials and tools, most of which you probably already use for miniatures painting and the rest of which are readily available:

- Hobby knife (X-acto #1 or similar);
- Several small files;
- Large file or medium sandpaper;
- White glue;
- Pieces of wood for temporary bases;
- Primer (optional);
- Black spray paint (Testor’s flat black enamel works well);
- Clear flat finish (optional);
- Paints (preferably acrylic): light tan, ivory, white, and black;
- Old battered brush, cut short for dry-brushing;

- Small brush (about size 0);
- Very small brush (3/0), or a technical pen, about size 00;
- Paper towels or old rags, and
- Water or solvent, as appropriate, for thinning paint and cleaning brushes.

Art supply stores are the best places to find brushes; they tend to have a much wider selection and better prices than hobby shops. White synthetic fiber brushes are good, but they may be hard to find. Acrylic paints, unlike the solvent-based paints, cannot be dissolved and smeared by freshly applied layers of color once they have dried. Armory and Polly S acrylics work well.

## Skeletons, bone by bone

To paint skeletons, first select suitable miniature figures. Some, such as the old Grenadier “Wizzards & Warriors” line, are too flat and crudely carved for this technique to work well. Most recent releases are adequate, and many of the recent figures from Grenadier and Ral Partha are superb. Look for deep sculpting and raised, clearly defined bones. The hands, feet, and rib cages are the usual trouble



Three custom-designed spearmen from the Bad Bones Legion, meeting an enemy's charge. Miniature designs and painting by David C. Sutherland III.



The techniques described in this article apply to all skeletons — even to those from Central America and the Orient.

spots. I prefer to buy new releases as soon as possible, as the molds used to cast them wear out. After many thousands of figures have been produced, this wear produces more mold flash and dulled details.

Second, each figure must be prepared for painting. This entails a bit of work with a knife and files to clean off the flash, mold lines, and other imperfections. It is essential that this be done as thoroughly as possible, as the painting technique described herein enhances any raised area, intended or not. Be especially thorough about the ribs; mold lines often run up the sides of the rib cage, and it pays to keep a small knife-edge needle file just to clean these up. Depending on your normal procedures, you may also want to chemically clean the figures. If not, a quick wash with hot, soapy water will remove many of the sorts of grunge which prevent paint from sticking properly. Be sure to rinse the soap off thoroughly, and only handle the figure by the base after cleaning. The use of primer is optional. Whether you use it or not depends on personal taste and the sticking abilities of the black spray paint you have. I myself use Floquil gray spray primer, which should be let dry for 24 hours.

When the figures are ready to paint, the first little trick of this painting technique comes into play. Lay all of the figures flat on several sheets of newspaper and spray paint them black. When they are dry, turn them over and do the same to the other sides. Be thorough, but avoid overdoing it. The skeletons will eventually have four layers of color (five if you used primer), so care must be taken not to make any too thick, to avoid chipping when they are handled.

Let the black paint dry overnight. It pays to be paranoid about the coat of paint at the bottom of any painting job. If it does not dry properly, your figures could go horribly bald at some inopportune

moment and will certainly not wear as well as their properly dried brethren. I generally spray a batch of figures before I go to bed, glue them to temporary bases for easier handling when I get up (that's what the bits of wood and the white glue are for), and paint them after I get home from work or after lunch on weekends. In between, I have time to touch up the specks where the spray did not cover, such as behind shields, under arms, etc. A black wash can sometimes help here.

Much of the subsequent paint on each skeleton is applied by drybrushing, which is one of the most important methods of producing highlighting and special effects. You will need an old and fairly wide brush that you do not care about damaging. Drybrushing shreds brushes, so it is a good way to use those old brushes you have lying around waiting to be thrown away. Dip the brush in paint and wipe most of the paint off on a rag or paper towel. Dab, wipe, or scrub the brush across the figure, depending on the amount of paint on the brush, the texture of the surface, and the coverage desired. The only way to get a feel for proper drybrushing is to practice.

The first color to be applied by dry brushing is the light tan. You should apply the tan fairly heavily, but be careful not to get it into the grooves between the bones. This is the foundation of the entire technique: It is much easier to paint something that protrudes than to dodge two protrusions and paint the depression between them. By such simple tricks are great undead made. The tan, if applied in a properly thin coat, will be fuzzy at the edges and allow some black to show through. That's fine; the tan is only important along the edges of the bones, where it portrays the bone curving into the dark interior of the skeletal body.

The second color used is ivory, the primary color for these skeletons. This will

be applied two ways. First, drybrush it on, in slightly less amounts than the tan. This serves to indicate which areas should be painted. Then, with the 0 and 3/0 brushes, carefully paint each bone. Since you are only working on the raised areas and have the drybrushing to guide you, this is quick and easy. The backbone, for instance, can be done as a series of dots. Be careful to keep the paint out of the black regions. Remember, it's always easier to put a little more paint on than to take it off again.

After the ivory comes white. Like the tan, this is drybrushed on. However, it is applied lightly, as a highlight. The only place you might need to actually paint it on is the back of the skull. Do not overdo the white; the primary color of the skeleton is ivory, with tan shadows and white highlights.

You will probably need to do a few touch-ups here and there, especially around the skull's face. This is where a fine-point Rapidograph or other tech pen comes in handy. It is easier to control than a brush and, while I have not tested it on oil-based paints, its permanent ink holds nicely to acrylics. A fine brush and a steady hand can fake it quite nicely, too.

Finally, you can paint armor, equipment, and whatever shreds of clothing are still hanging on each skeleton. Paint colors for these details were not included in the materials list, because they vary depending on what the particular figures you are painting happen to carry and wear. Armor is best done with heavily drybrushed dark silver, followed by a very light highlight of normal silver in a few spots. Weapons should be painted dark silver, sometimes highlighted with drybrushed silver or platinum. A little rust paint goes a long way — don't overdo it. Dark bronze followed by bronze or gold handles most gold-colored things. Remember that gold does not tarnish; it does, however, get dirty, and it has shadows like anything.

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else. For leather, heavily drybrush or lightly paint dark brown, with a very light highlighting of a lighter brown. When Polly S did official AD&D™ paints, it had a color called "Otyugh Brown" that was perfect for leather surfaces. This same technique works very nicely for painting wooden parts on shields. The hafts of weapons such as axes and pole arms should be slightly lighter in color than other woods. The bases of undead figures can be painted charcoal gray.

The matter of shreds of clothing on skeletons brings us to a category of undead figures which I call the robed undead, as these figures are generally rather well clothed. Robed undead include liches, zombies, and various other horrors. Their skins, where applicable, are fairly easy to paint. If you can't get properly rotten-looking greenish-gray paint, it is easy to mix it yourself. The cloth areas are another matter entirely.

Look at an old piece of cloth. The color is dull, often worn in places. All of the colors look dusty and vaguely alike in some hard-to-define way. If the cloth has been attacked by mold, these effects are more pronounced.

To paint such old, worn, rotting clothing, start with a color quite a bit darker than the intended result, followed up by the primary color of the clothing, then by a lighter shade for highlights. One of the

neat things about this is that the naturally irregular finish left by drybrushing is perfect for simulating cloth! Shades of tan nicely simulate a sort of unbleached muslin color, but dull red and dark green also work well. Ghosts and other wispy undead should use the same tan-ivory-white sequence of painting as skeleton bones.

Try out these techniques on your next undead. You will be amazed by how well they look when you start by painting them black. Incidentally, this dark-priming technique works well on other sorts of figures as well. It is nice for giving a dark tone to just about anything. Among the figures I have used it on are an antipaladin, a brother and sister team of thieves, a small red dragon, two bandits, and some drow. □



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# SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

If you have any questions on the games produced by TSR, Inc., "Sage Advice" will answer them. In the United States and Canada, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON® Magazine, PO. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Sage Advice, DRAGON Magazine, TSR UK Limited, The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD, United Kingdom.

This month, "Sage Advice" returns to the topic of monsters in the AD&D® game, last covered in issue #131.

## Undead

**Undead, as a general class of monsters, are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells. Does this immunity also extend to web spells?**

In general, no. Any creature with a corporeal body can be ensnared by a web unless it possesses some special form of protection, such as a *ring of free action*. Of course, incorporeal undead such as wraiths, spectres, groaning spirits, ghosts, and vampires in *gaseous form* are immune to webs.

**Can normal persons speak with undead?**

Unintelligent undead do not converse; they simply attack living things. The more powerful, intelligent, corporeal undead such as vampires and liches do speak. Whether or not other undead speak is up to the DM. In general, undead are malevolent beings who hate life and are not prone to talk. However, having an undead monster speak for dramatic effect is perfectly acceptable.

**Which creatures can become undead? Is it possible to have vampiric purple worms or spectral trolls? Or is undead status limited to humans and demi-humans? If so, what happens to other creatures who are slain by "undead-creating" undead?**

Some DMs rule that only humans become undead, but it is more common to include all the PC races and their NPC subraces. Animals and monsters never become undead unless their remains are magically animated as skeletons or zombies. Such creatures simply die when slain by undead.

**What happens when an undead with a link to the Negative Material plane is *plane shifted* to an outer plane? Would this sever the link?**

*Plane shift* has no special effect on undead. If the spell succeeds, that portion of the undead that was formerly on the Prime Material is shifted to the destination plane; the link to the Negative Material remains intact. It is quite possible that the residents of the destination plane will resent having an undead monster dumped into their midst.

**Can psionically aware creatures attack intelligent undead with attack mode A, assuming that they meet the requirements for using this attack on nonpsionic beings? Can intelligent undead be *dominated*? I assume the undead immunity to *charm* prevents this.**

There is no reason why any undead that is capable of independent thought should not be subject to psionic attack, including domination (this is not *charm*, per se). Mindless undead, such as skeletons, are immune to psionic attacks. Individual DMs might choose to rule that all undead are immune to psionic attacks unless they themselves use psionics.

**Can undead be psionic, assuming that the creature in question was psionic in life?**

Only those undead which can retain character abilities, such as vampires and liches, can retain psionic abilities in their undead states.

**Are wights, wraiths, mummies, vampires, and spectres affected by *magic missiles*, lightning, and magical fire?**

See the individual monster descriptions for each creature's immunities; note that all undead are immune to *charms*, *holds*, *paralyzation*, *sleep*, and *poison*. Any attack which is not prohibited is allowable.

**How does a skeleton see? What about other creatures that don't have eyes?**

One can assume that the magic that animates a skeleton also grants it 60' infravision. Other eyeless creatures don't see at all; they navigate by touch, smell, or hearing. Such creatures are never fooled by *invisibility* spells.

**Will a paladin's *protection from evil* keep ghouls at bay?**

Yes, but ghouls are the only undead creatures so affected. The paladin (or spell-caster) can voluntarily break the circle in order to melee the ghoul, but this allows the ghoul to return the attack, though at the appropriate penalty (see the spell's description on page 44 of the *Players Handbook*).

**The *Monster Manual* says that spectres are totally powerless in sunlight. What does this mean in game terms?**

A spectre cannot drain levels or inflict damage when exposed to natural sunlight or its magical equivalent, such as light produced by a *sun blade* (*continual light*, although quite bright, is not equal to full daylight). Spectres will flee from sunlight whenever they encounter it, and will never enter it willingly. Spectres regain their powers immediately upon leaving direct sunlight.

**Can a cleric turn a banshee?**

According to the rules, no. Individual DMs might allow them to be turned as special monsters, however.

**What is a lesser vampire?**

A lesser vampire is created when a vampire drains a victim of life energy, and the victim (now a normal vampire, though possibly with extra abilities carried over from life) remains under the vampire's control; see the *Monster Manual*, page 99.

**Can a vampire drain energy levels after a stake has been driven through its heart? If it can, will simply touching its body cause the energy drain?**

A stake through the heart totally incapacitates a vampire. It cannot move, attack, or use its special abilities; it is not destroyed, however, until additional steps are taken (see the *Monster Manual*, page 99). All touch-delivered attacks, including an undead's energy drain, require a successful melee hit from the creature delivering the attack. Simply touching an active vampire will not cause energy loss.

**AD&D game module GDQ1-7 *Queen of the Spiders* (pages 70-71) speaks of a vampire striking away a holy symbol and suffering 2-12 hp damage. The *Monster Manual*, on the other hand, says that holy symbols do not harm vampires. Please resolve this contradiction.**

No contradiction exists. The line in the *Monster Manual* is meant to convey that holy symbols have no effect when used against vampires as weapons. Any lawful-good holy symbol, however, is an effective barrier against a vampire. The rather unusual vampire in the module chose to

force its way through the barrier instead of bypassing it as most vampires do (see the *Monster Manual*, page 99). The damage is the consequence of the vampire's unusual action, not a character's. Note also that if a character tries to use a holy symbol as a weapon, it ceases to function as a barrier; the vampire can return the attack without penalty. This is similar to what happens when a paladin voluntarily breaks his *protection from evil* in order to melee an extraplanar creature.

## Miscellaneous monsters

**How do spells affect nilbogs? Are there limits on nilbogism — such as range, save, or limits on total hit dice or levels affected?**

"Harmful" magic gives nilbogs hit points on a one-for-one basis. Death magic doubles a nilbog's current hit points. Curative spells harm nilbogs. Spells which cause no damage work normally on nilbogs. Any creature that can see or affect a nilbog is subject to nilbogism's peculiar effects (if it tries to do anything to the nilbog). Nilbogism has no range, level, or hit dice limits, or saving throw.

**I can't find the statistics for the amphisbaena.**

This monster is listed on page 88 of the *Monster Manual*, under the heading "Snake, Giant."

**Can a character get lycanthropy from a lycanthrope's claws?**

No, only from the bite. When characters fight lycanthropes, it's best to keep separate track of the claw and bite damage each character suffers.

**My character was recently overwhelmed by a horde of small scorpions that swarmed out of a barrel. I later discovered that these tiny monsters have 2 + 2 HD, three attacks each, and move as fast as an armored man. Isn't that a bit much for normal arachnids?**

For normal arachnids, yes. But a 2 + 2 HD scorpion is not a normal creature. This creature is listed in the *Monster Manual II* as small, which means it's smaller than a normal human — but easily 3-4' long. (See the introductory sections of the monster tomes for explanations of all the terms used in monster descriptions.) A horde of them could not fit in a barrel; your DM made a mistake. A swarm of biting or stinging insects or arachnids inflicts 1-2 hp per round at most. If they have poison, one save per round will suffice.

**How many hit dice does a huge patch of green slime have?**

A 2-HD patch of green slime is about 3' in diameter, or about seven square feet, enough to fill a typical doorway. Larger patches have one additional hit die per each additional three square feet.

## Extraplanar monsters

**My DM recently ruled that my party's cleric could not *plane shift* a type V demon because the spell requires a touch and the demon is immune to normal weapons. The cleric's hand, my DM said, is not a magical weapon.**

Your DM is wrong. While a character's hand is not a magical weapon, immunity to normal weapons does not confer immunity to touch-delivered spells. While a touch-delivered spell does require a successful melee hit, it is not a melee attack per se. Some DMs allow a spell-caster to keep a touch-delivered spell "on hand" until he touches something; thus, if the first attempt to touch the target misses, he can try again. Holding a spell on hand requires minor concentration which can be broken voluntarily or by an attack that damages the spell-caster. As long as the spell is on hand, it will be discharged whenever the caster's hands touch anything or anyone. The demon in your example is entitled to its magic-resistance roll even if the touch succeeds.

**Both the succubus and the aludemon have the ability to *shape change* into humanoid creatures of roughly their own sizes. Is this a true shape change ability, in that**

**these monsters actually gain the abilities of their new forms? Also, how great a change in size is allowed?**

These creatures' *shape change* abilities are not the same as the ninth-level magic-user spell; they are similar to the more limited druidic ability. The ability is only useful for disguise and deception, to conceal these creatures' demonic natures. These demons are limited to the forms of creatures that are identified as "persons" on page 45 of the *Players Handbook* and similar creatures from the FIEND FOLIO® tome and *Monster Manual II*. The disguise is complete, however, and the demon receives all of the racial abilities of the new form. For example, a succubus *shape changed* into a dwarf would be able to spot unsafe stonework, determine depth, etc. Remember that character levels are not a racial characteristic. I suggest limiting the change in size to 25% of the original creature's actual height and weight.

**Can a character pay a noble time elemental to move him to a time when an adversary was only 1st level, so he can be easily killed? Where is the plane of Time?**

It might be possible for player characters to convince a time elemental to move them in time. Time elementals are merely

Continued on page 77

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# Dreadful Tidings





by Craig Schaefer

# The Black Book and the Hunters

*New items for Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU<sup>®</sup> game*

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*Before his untimely death in 1934, the renowned professor and occultist, Howard Brimley, had consulted nearly every tome relevant to the Cthulhu Mythos in his search for a way to destroy the Elder Gods once and for all. Although he never found the solution to his quest, he compiled many notes dealing with nearly every facet of the mythos. Presented here is a portion of his recently rediscovered manuscripts — a fragment dealing with one of the lesser-known works of the mythos, **The Black Book of Shub-Niggurath**. It is hoped that this information will be of use to investigators everywhere.*

---

MS: #02025 book catalog

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RE: **The Black Book of Shub-Niggurath**

I acquired **The Black Book** two years ago, purely by chance. Since then, I feel I have sufficiently analyzed it to give a proper description of its contents.

As every serious student of the occult knows, the deity Shub-Niggurath is a goddess concerned with fertility. **The Black Book** clarifies this, as it seems to be some kind of prayer book for her earthly priests. Not only is it full of prayers to this monstrous goddess, it also contains material relevant to Nyarlathotep. It is yet unknown what kind of connection the two gods have, or if there is any true connection between them at all.

**The Black Book** is a hardbound tome with a flat black cover; its dimensions are 8" x 11" x 1½". The copy I found is written in archaic Latin, comprising 368 pages and no illustrations of any sort. Nevertheless, this version of **The Black Book** has evidence of a color drawing on the very first page. When I received the volume, however, the page had been torn

out, leaving only the very edge of the picture. It remains to be seen what the picture was and what importance it had.

The first page past the torn sheet holds a popular prayer to Shub-Niggurath. It reads (when translated):

"O friend and companion of night,  
thou who rejoices in the baying of dogs  
and spilt blood, who wanderest in the  
midst of shades among the tombs, who  
longest for blood and bringest terror  
to mortals, Gorgo, Mormo, thousand-  
faced moon, look favorably on our  
sacrifices!"

**The Black Book** is filled with doggerel such as this, as well as several sets of instruction for ceremonies to Shub-Niggurath. While the spell Call Shub-Niggurath is well known to many magicians and practitioners of the dark arts, the adaption in **The Black Book** is unusual in that it summons Shub-Niggurath, places her in a form of stasis, and forces her to answer any questions the caster of the spell asks. The spell is apparently used to force the goddess to appear at important cult ceremonies.

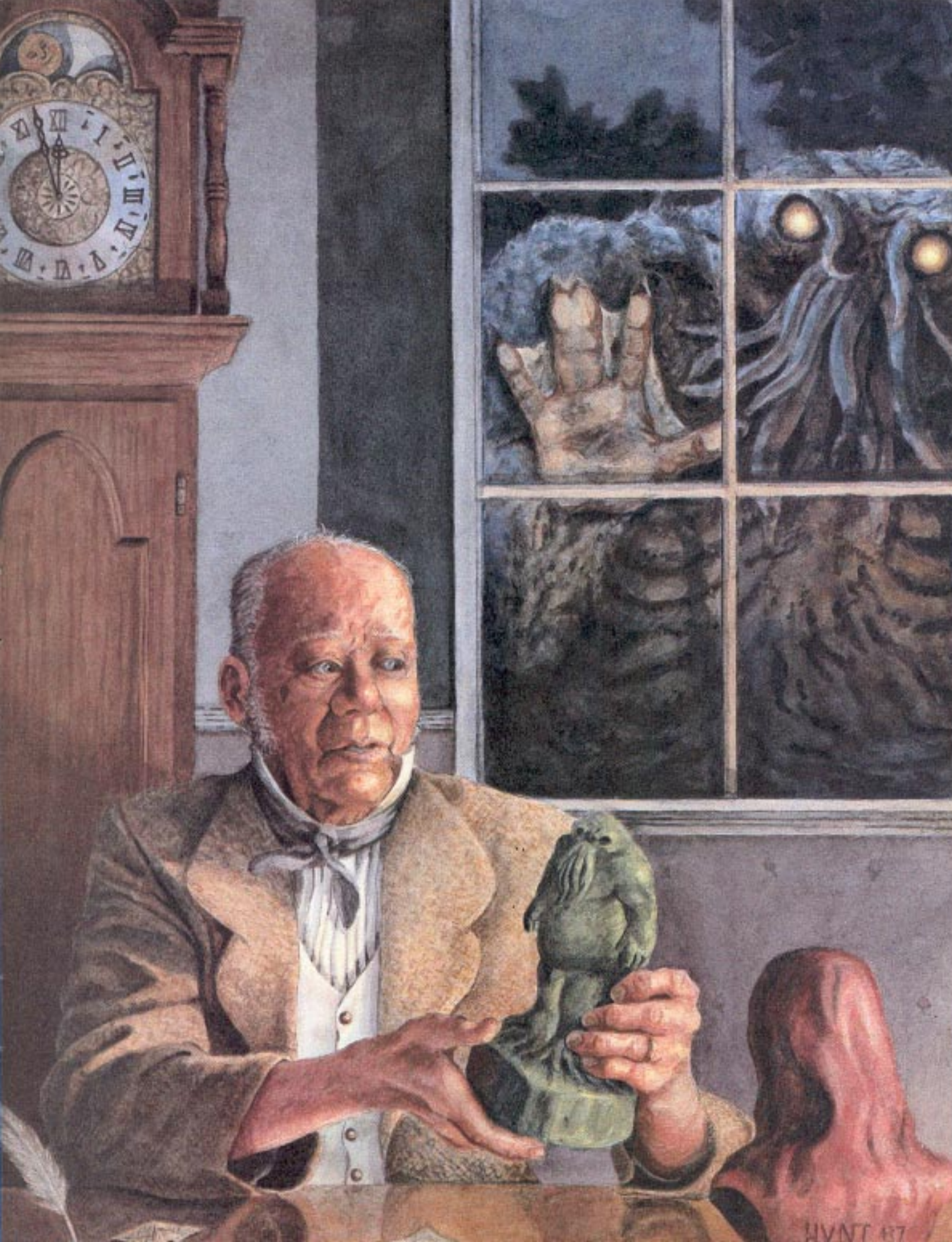
The book holds several other spells as well, only two of which are unusual. One of the magical formulas is for the creation of a Knife of Power, a potent weapon used most often by cult priests to slay sacrifices. According to **The Black Book**, the Knife (note that I am judging by extrapolation; I have not taken the time to create one of my own) stores the power of those slain with it. On command, a bolt of energy powered by the souls within the blade spring forth from the dagger's tip. The bolt itself is a very powerful weapon with apparently enough energy to blast a hole through a sheet of metal.

The other unusual spell is used to summon a creature not previously described in the other books of occult lore I have perused. Called the Hunter of Shub-Niggurath, this entity appears to belong to a powerful servitor race, not unlike the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath. Recently, I set about to conjure and study one of those servitors, and I was able to learn something about it.

The Hunters of Shub-Niggurath are fortunately seldom encountered. Unlike their "brothers," the Dark Young, the Hunters are never called to preside over cult ceremonies or to perform similar functions. They are called into service and controlled only by high priests or by Shub-Niggurath herself.

The Hunters are called from their home world for one purpose only — to hunt. When summoned and given the description of a victim, a Hunter tracks down the target and will not stop until either it or the target is dead. The Hunter has a special sense which allows it to home in on a person when provided with something the person has recently touched (such as a nail clipping or a lock of hair).

The Hunter that I conjured was about 8' tall; it stood on two legs and walked erect. The Hunter was massive and vaguely humanoid in appearance, being covered in filthy brownish-gray fur. Its head was merged with its torso so that it had no neck whatsoever and no true face, except for its yellow, pupilless eyes and a mass of tentacles between and below them. Its hands were humanlike, except for the merging of two fingers and the presence of webbing between the other digits. Short, ironlike talons projected from each finger. Despite its bloated appearance, the Hunter seemed quite agile and restless, and paced back and forth on its rootlike feet, its facial tentacles writhing and curl-



ing like serpents. In certain ways, it resembled one of the Star-Spawn of Cthulhu, though it lacked wings.

The Hunter did not speak except in grunts and low squeals (perhaps its native language), though it is capable of a crude communication through a rough form of empathy, which transmits the Hunter's intentions and emotions to nearby beings. Apparently, Hunters are unable to control this ability; thus, they project their mental conditions (such as they are) constantly. From the one Hunter I summoned, I received very powerful feelings of impatience and anticipation; it doubtless desired to go on a hunt.

The Hunters' point of origin is as yet unknown. They could be from an entirely different dimension, or they could be the spawn from a nearby planet in our own solar system.

All in all, *The Black Book of Shub-Niggurath* is quite valuable, especially to devotees of that deity. Otherwise, its value depends on the individual investigator. Probably the best use of this tome is to study the spell knowledge it contains, though I have faithfully copied the summoning ryal for Shub-Niggurath; if indeed this creature is summoned in a helpless condition, more the better to destroy it in a relatively safe fashion. One can only hope for the best. . . .

#### Game notes

For Keepers who wish to use *The Black Book*, the Hunters of Shub-Niggurath, and any of the new spells in this article, the following statistics are included.

*The Black Book of Shub-Niggurath* gives 5% Cthulhu Mythos knowledge, with a spell multiplier of 2. *The Black Book* may be found in several different languages, most commonly English or Spanish. The SAN loss for reading *The Black Book* is 1d6. Since this book is fairly low-powered (in terms of knowledge gained), it may be one of the first Mythos works the adven-

turers find. Consequently, nearly every powerful priest of Shub-Niggurath possesses a copy.

Spells are gained from *The Black Book* in the following order:

1. Summon Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath
2. Bind Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath
3. Call Shub-Niggurath
4. Bind Shub-Niggurath (new spell)
5. Contact Nyarlathotep
6. Enchant Power Knife (new spell)
7. Summon Hunter of Shub-Niggurath (new spell)
8. Voorish Sign

The majority of these spells are described in the CALL OF CTHULHU game rule book. The three new spells follow:

**Bind Shub-Niggurath:** This powerful spell summons Shub-Niggurath, who appears at the caster's location in a form of stasis from which she cannot escape until the caster frees her, she makes a roll of 10 or less on 1d100 (made every minute), or she is attacked. In the case of being allowed to leave, there is a 20% chance Shub-Niggurath will kill the caster before she goes. In any other case, Shub-Niggurath automatically attacks anyone in sight before disappearing. This spell is commonly used by cultists to bring Shub-Niggurath to preside over certain special ceremonies. Her displeasure is hopefully eased by placing many sacrificial victims around her summoning point.

This spell has another use, however — one that is of potential interest to wizards. When Shub-Niggurath is held in stasis, the caster may ask any questions of the deity. Under the influence of the spell, Shub-Niggurath is compelled to answer them (unfortunately for the caster, she is under no obligation to answer truthfully). Also, every question asked adds 5% to Shub-Niggurath's chance of escape (calculated every minute). Of course, when freed, the deity will not hesitate in slaying the mage, even to the extent of sending a Dark Young or a Hunter if her prey escapes. Only the most powerful or foolish wizards use this spell for this purpose.

This spell costs three permanent POW points to cast, with another POW lost upon the word to release Shub-Niggurath from her prison. The spell requires special candles, a pentagram, and several other ceremonial items that cost at least \$200 to procure.

**Enchant Power Knife:** This is one of the Enchant Item spells described in the CALL OF CTHULHU game rule book, pages 76-77. To create a Power Knife requires a sacrifice to Shub-Niggurath of at least 10 SIZ worth of victims, the permanent loss of 3 POW, and a sanity loss of 1d10. It takes two days to cast this spell, and the result is a very formidable weapon.

When the Power Knife is completed and is used to kill a being while a prayer to Shub-Niggurath is spoken, the dagger literally absorbs the POW that the victim

had at the time of its death. That, however, is just half of the special power of the knife. Upon command, a beam of energy is emitted from the tip of the knife, automatically hitting the chosen target. Before firing, though, the user must specify how many POW points he is expending. The POW used in the attack is gone from the knife forever, having changed into energy to fuel the beam. The effective length of the energy beam is 10 meters per point of POW used.

Next, the victim matches his POW against the POW used in the beam's attack. If the beam is overcome by the victim's POW, the attack has no effect and the POW used by the knife is wasted. On the other hand, if the victim is overcome, he must roll the result of his CON x 3 or lower on 1d100. If the victim succeeds, he takes 1d10 damage from the beam. If he fails the roll, he is instantly blasted to ashes. Because of this weapon's evil nature, it is seldom used by investigators but can often be found in the hands of a high priest of Shub-Niggurath. The knife is only usable by its creator.

**Summon Hunter of Shub-Niggurath:** This spell is identical to the other Summon spells, and it requires an idol of either Shub-Niggurath or a Hunter to work. As described in the text given earlier, this spell summons a single Hunter.

#### Hunter of Shub-Niggurath (Greater Servitor Race)

**Description:** A full description of this creature is provided in the manuscript supplied by Howard Brimley, given earlier in this article.

**Notes:** A Hunter, as stated earlier, is only summoned to hunt down beings who have somehow offended Shub-Niggurath or her representatives. It has a sense that allows it to home in on its target. Once its mission is complete, it disintegrates automatically.

Characteristics		Average
STR	5D6 + 20	37 - 38
CON	5D6 + 10	27 - 28
SIZ	5D6	17 - 18
INT	2D6	7
POW	1D6	3 - 5
DEX	4D6	14
Hit points		30
Move		10

Weapon	Attk%	Damage
Claw (2)	60	2d6
Facial tentacles	90	5d6

**Armor:** A Hunter has thick hide worth 4 points.

**Spells:** A Hunter has no spells, but it has the homing ability described previously.

**Skills:** Sneak 95%, Hide 55%, Climb 80%, Swim 50%.

**SAN:** Seeing a Hunter of Shub-Niggurath costs 1d10 points of SAN. A successful SAN roll still costs 1d6 points of SAN. Ω

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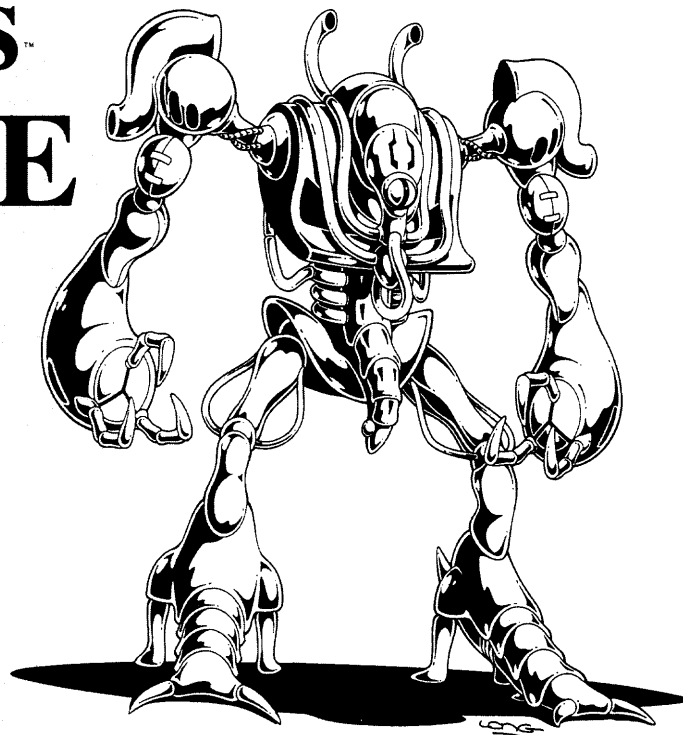
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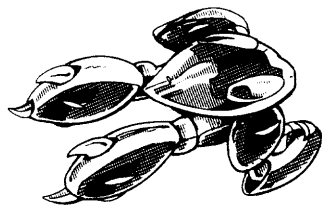
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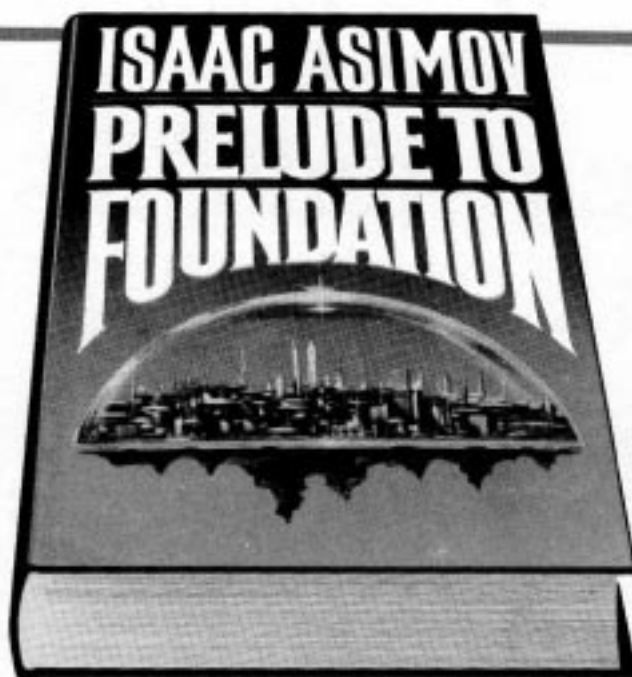
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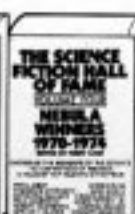
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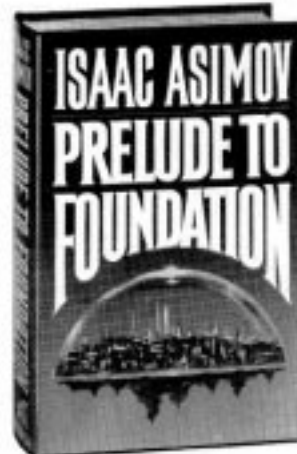
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by Tom Moldvay

# The Ungrateful Dead

*Expanding the ranks of the ghastly host*

The term “undead” was popularized by Bram Stoker in his novel, *Dracula*. He used it as a synonym for “vampire,” but he implied that there might be other kinds of undead besides the minions of the Count. Vampires in general (and *Dracula* in particular) have proved a continual source of inspiration for the horror genre [see “*Hearts of Darkness*,” from *DRAGON*® issue #126, for more on this topic]. In the proliferation of horror movies, the word “undead” came to be used for a variety of monsters, most of which had some connection with vampires.

Undead monsters are an essential part of the AD&D® game. For example, the ability of clerics to turn the undead is one of the prime functions of that class. Undead are frequently encountered in adventures and fit well into nearly any plot, because their motivations are simple and easy to understand — they hate the living and seek to destroy all life.

Indeed, the undead are the archetypes of monsters. They are evil and deadly, with frightening powers. Their hatreds are unreasoning; their attacks are guaranteed. Characters facing the undead have but two choices: fight or run.

The term “undead” literally means “not dead,” with the implication that such creatures are also “not living.” Undead thus have the semblance of life in that they have bodies but are not truly alive. To provide high-level clerics with foes, the concept of “undeath” has been expanded in the AD&D game to include ghostlike creatures from other planes of existence, but even the ghost can semi-materialize to attack by touch.

Of the more than 350 monsters in the *Monster Manual I* and among the other

creatures described in later books, there appear a number of “classical” undead, archetypes that form the basis of the entire category of undead monsters. Classical undead have three things in common: 1) By all rights, such creatures should be dead; 2) Most such creatures have some sort of physical form; and 3) Most such creatures are hopelessly evil and attack living beings on sight.

This article will examine three of these classical undead in detail: skeletons, zombies, and ghouls. In particular, this article will look at the background of each kind of undead, the function of each undead type in game terms, possible variations on the basic monster listings, and suggestions for adventure subplots.

The background section of each listing will try to answer questions like: What inspired the idea for this monster? Are there traditional myths dealing with this kind of undead? Does the monster appear often in books or movies?

If the Dungeon Master understands the game function of any particular monster, he or she can use the creature to maximum effect. It also becomes easier to alter the monster slightly for its surprise value or design a new creature that serves a similar function. Variety keeps the players guessing; an element of uncertainty keeps an adventure interesting.

While an entire adventure based on the undead might be too heavily slanted toward the cleric character class, a subplot dealing with the undead fits well into any adventure. (Perhaps the undead haunt a small cemetery or roam a deserted castle tower near the main adventure area.) Subplots should be kept reasonably small, dealing with a half-dozen encounters at

most. The best subplots would be adventures in miniature, each having a logic all its own. Good subplots have their own beginnings and ends, with crises that must be resolved.

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## Skeletons

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The skeleton listing is not based on traditional lore and was invented for the game. Skeletons are, however, universal symbols of death and the dead. Skeleton costumes are traditional for Halloween, the night when the dead return to join the living. The Grim Reaper is often depicted as a giant skeleton wielding a scythe. The major arcana card of Death in the tarot deck often shows a skeleton. Skeletons that move defy the laws of nature. They are a logical choice when making up a class of undead.

In the AD&D game, skeletons are magically animated by clerics or magic-users. More often than not, the spell-caster is evil, since disturbing the dead is not something encouraged by the forces of good or neutrality. The corpse used for the *animate dead* spell has been buried for so long that only bones remain (or perhaps all flesh is destroyed in the process of animation, leaving only bones). Skeletons are the weakest of the undead. In game terms, their function is to try to swamp low-level characters by sheer numbers.

A traditional monster from English folklore similar to skeletons is Bloody Bones. The monster's full name is Rawhead-and-Bloody-Bones, and it is sometimes referred to as Old Bloody Bones or Tommy Rawhead. Samuel Johnson, in his 17th-century dictionary, defined the creature as “the name of a spectre, mentioned to fright children.” (Here, spectre is, of course, used generically, and bears no relationship to the AD&D game monster of the same name.)

In *Folklore Society County Publications* (of England), Ruth Tongue quotes two informants who described Bloody Bones as living in dark shadowy places such as in deep cupboards, inside closets, or under the stairs. Those who are heroic enough to peep through a crack might get a glimpse of the dreadful crouching creature, with blood running down its face, seated waiting on a pile of bones that once belonged to children who told lies or said bad words. However, if you spied upon the monster, it knew about it and got you anyway.

Most creatures classed as “nursery bogies” are based on earlier legendary tales of monsters. In Lancashire and Yorkshire, Rawhead-and-Bloody-Bones is a kind of evil spirit haunting old marl pits and similar places. In Cornwall, Old Bloody Bones lives in abandoned mines, especially those near the sites of ancient battles. Bloody Bones lies waiting to grab victims who pass nearby, dragging the unwary down into deep forbidding lairs.

## BLOODY BONES

---

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*  
NO. APPEARING: 1 (30% chance of 2-12)  
ARMOR CLASS: 7  
MOVE: 12"  
HIT DICE: 3  
% IN LAIR: 50%  
TREASURE TYPE: 40% chance each of J-N  
(B in lair if more than 1)  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-10  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Fear*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Low*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*  
SIZE: *M*  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Bloody bones are the undead, animated corpses of evil criminals cursed to continue their horrid trade long after they should have died. They look like bloody skeletons with a few shreds of flesh hanging on the bones. In fact, they resemble corpses left hanging on gibbets (a traditional punishment for criminals).

Bloody bones lair in hidden caves or deep concealed pits. They venture forth only to kill and rob victims. At the sight of a bloody bones, a character must make a saving throw vs. spells or else suffer the

effects of a *fear* spell.

For the effects of damage vs. a bloody bones, treat the creature as if it were a skeleton (i.e., one-half damage from sharp weapons, etc.). The chance of a cleric turning a bloody bones is the same as the cleric's chance to turn a shadow.

In films such as *Jason and the Argonauts* and the various Sinbad movies, model-animator Ray Harryhausen created some spectacular special effects. One such special effect was that of skeletal warriors wielding swords and carrying shields. Ray Harryhausen's skeletons are fast and nimble, appearing to be more formidable opponents than the skeletons in the AD&D game. This has inspired a variant monster: the skleros. Skleros is Greek for dry and hard, and is a root for the word "skeleton."

## SKLEROS

---

FREQUENCY: *Rare*  
NO. APPEARING: 3-24  
ARMOR CLASS: 5 (6 without shield)  
MOVE: 12"  
HIT DICE: 1 + 1  
% IN LAIR: *Nil*  
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*  
NO OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-8

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*  
SIZE: *M*  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Skleros are skeletons made from the corpses of highly trained warriors (fighters of 4th level or better) that still magically retain some of their past fighting skills. Their better armor class is due not only to the shields they carry but to their heightened dexterity (equal to 15). They usually fight with long swords. Because they "remember" many of their old fighting habits, skleros attack as if they had 2 hit dice; they would thus have a THAC0 (score to hit AC 0) of 16. Clerics have the same chances to turn skleros as they would zombies. While skleros have no treasure of their own, they often act as treasure guards.

A classic Walt Disney cartoon featured dancing skeletons, and animated skeletons often appear in cartoon features. Such skeletons not only dance but trade heads, fall into piles of bones, and reform into skeletons again. The skeleton variation herein called dry bones is inspired by the antics of cartoon skeletons. The name "dry bones" comes from the song of the same name ("The leg bone's connected to the hip bone," etc.).

## Bloody Bones



## DRY BONES

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FREQUENCY: *Rare*  
NO. APPEARING: 2-20  
ARMOR CLASS: 7  
MOVE: 12"  
HIT DICE: 4; *see below*  
% IN LAIR: *Nil*  
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-6  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral*  
SIZE: *M*  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Dry bones are the same as skeletons with one important difference. They can only be destroyed when all their bones are pulverized or otherwise completely destroyed. Each dry bones has 4 HD (with 32 hp) but attacks as a 1-HD creature. A dry bones taking a total of 8 or more hp damage collapses into a pile of bones. After one round, the bones re-form into a skeleton and attack again. The process continues until the dry bones has taken a total of 32 or more hp damage in combat, at which point the dry bones falls apart forever.

Dry bones often masquerade as mere

piles of old bones, being able to dismember themselves at will until they are destroyed. Clerics have the same chances to turn dry bones as they would zombies. While dry bones have no treasure themselves, they often act as treasure guards.

Skeletons could be used as the undead repositories for enchanted magical items. The actual threat from such skeletons would come from the items carried, not so much the skeletons themselves. One simple but effective example of this is to give a skeleton a pair of enchanted gems for eyes. These gems would normally glow with magical light. As a general class, such skeletons could be referred to as "gem eyes." The actual creature names, however, would depend on the type of gem used for eyes (hence ruby eyes, diamond eyes, etc.).

### GEM EYES

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*  
NO. APPEARING: 1-12  
ARMOR CLASS: 7  
MOVE: 12"  
HIT DICE: 4 + 2  
% IN LAIR: *Nil*  
TREASURE TYPE: *Special*  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-6  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Spells*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Low*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*  
SIZE: M  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Gem eyes are special undead creatures created by powerful magic-users. Each skeleton has a pair of glowing gems for eyes, and each pair of gems holds one magical spell. The power of the eyes is linked to the "unlife" of the creature. Hence, the magical power leaves the gems when the skeleton is reduced to zero or less hit points.

The magic-users who create gem eyes take special care to make the skeletal life force stronger than normal (hence the 4 + 2 hit dice). The magic-user must be at least 11th level. Instead of animating 11 skeletons with an *animate dead* spell, the magic-user animates one gem-eyes skeleton with more hit dice. Theoretically, any magical spell could be put into the eyes (using *enchant an item* or *permanency*), but two factors limit the gems' magical power. The spells used in the gems are normally fourth level or lower; and spells tied to the "natural" power of the gem types are easier to make permanent.

When designing varieties of gem eyes, the DM may wish to refer to pages 26-27 of the *Dungeon Masters Guide* ("Reputed Magical Properties of Gems"). The following eight varieties of gem eyes are based

on a traditional system of magical symbolism that ties various stones to the so-called "Seven Magical Planets" (cf. *Occult Philosophy* or *Magic* by Henry Cornelius Agrippa, originally published in 1510).

*Ruby eyes* have the *burning eyes* spell, which is essentially the same as the first-level magic-user spell *burning hands* (except the flames radiate from the gem eyes instead of the hands). Treat the spell as if cast by a 9th-level magic-user (hence it does 9 hp damage). This power is usable three times per day.

*Sapphire eyes* grant luck to their animator, if within 60' of such a magic-user. All saving throws and "to hit" rolls made by the spell-caster gain a +2 bonus. This power has no set limit on duration, though it ends if the gem eyes is destroyed.

*Diamond eyes* have the power to double their movements and attacks, the same as the third-level magic-user spell *haste*, three times per day.

*Amethyst eyes* have the power to cast illusions, as per the third-level magic-user spell *phantasmal force*. Two such illusions may be cast per day.

*Opal eyes* can appear to duplicate themselves, as per the second-level magic-user spell *mirror image*. This spell may be cast three times per day.

*Pearl eyes* cause opponents to fall asleep, as per the first-level magic-user spell *sleep*, up to three times per day.

Obsidian eyes radiate darkness, as per the second-level magic-user spell *darkness* 15' radius. This power may be used three times per day.

Emerald eyes weaken opponents, as per the second-level magic-user spell *ray of enfeeblement*, by touch. This power may be used three times per day.

The magic of the gemstone eyes is so powerful that it temporarily endows these skeletons with limited intelligence (enough to cast the spells effectively). The treasure of gem eyes lies in the value of their eyes themselves; each gem is worth 1,000 gp. Gem eyes can be turned by clerics as if the creatures were ghosts. Any gem eyes turned away take their gems with them, of course.

If designing a unique variety of gem eyes, the DM should be careful which spells are put into the eyes. Since it takes at least a 9th-level magic-user to animate the dead, and an 11th-level magic-user to animate gem eyes, certain spells such as *fireball* or *lightning bolt* are simply too powerful for low-level adventures.

Electricity is a basic and primal force. It is easy to picture electricity as the power used to animate the dead (it worked for the cinematic Dr. Frankenstein). A classic biology experiment uses electricity to make a dead frog's leg twitch. If electricity is the force powering a type of skeleton, then combat can be unusual. Anyone hitting the monster with a metallic weapon, such as a sword, will both cause dam-

age and take damage at the same time. The safest way to strike the "shock bones" would be with a weapon having a wooden spoon handle, such as an axe or spear.

### SHOCK BONES

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*  
NO APPEARING: 3-18  
ARMOR CLASS: 7  
MOVE: 12"  
HIT DICE: 1  
% IN LAIR: *Nil*  
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*  
NO OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-12  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Electricity*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Electricity*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*  
SIZE: M  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

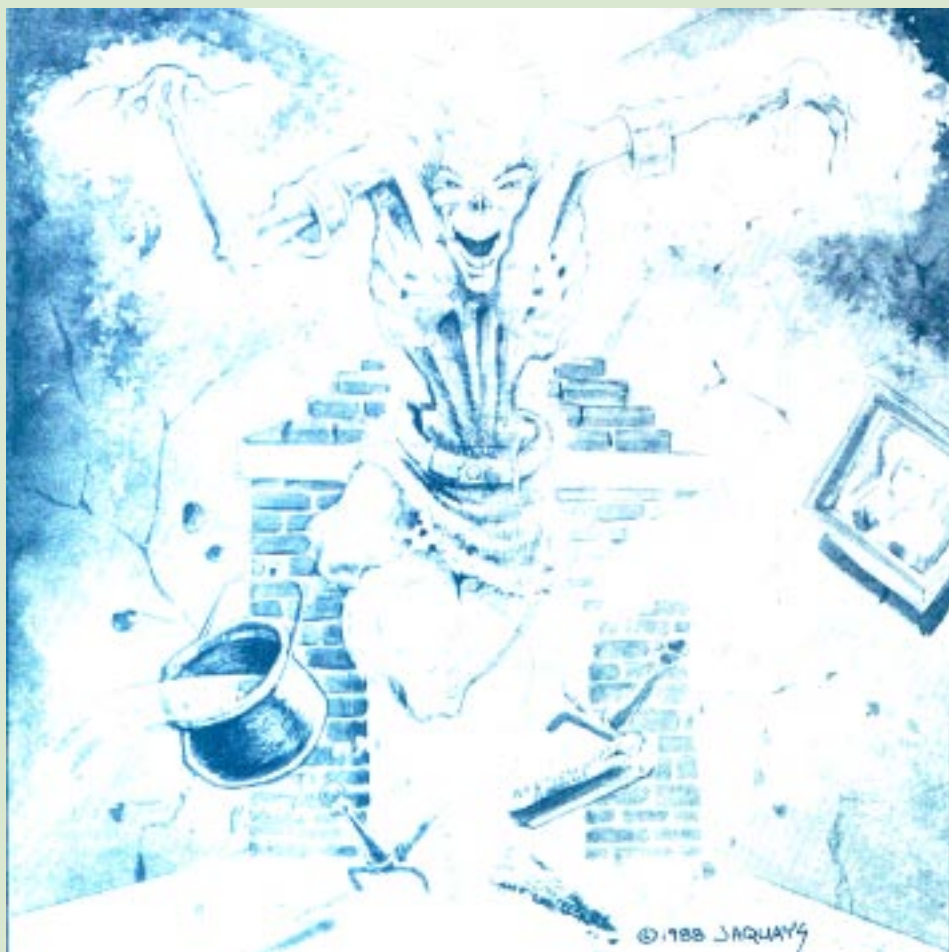
Shock bones are skeletons animated by both magic and electricity. Their attacks do damage from electrical shock. Anyone hitting a shock bones with a metallic weapon that conducts electricity automatically takes 2-12 hp damage. Clerics have the same chances to turn shock bones as they do zombies. While shock bones have no treasure themselves, they often act as treasure guards.

A shock bones might also be created by an alchemist or sage in a sort of Dr. Frankenstein-type experiment. Such a monster would not truly be undead, and though it would conform to the above statistics, it could not be turned by clerics.

A *variation* of a monster listing is one close enough to some other listing that it was probably inspired by the latter. An *affinity* is a listing that has some similarities to another listing, usually either in the visual description of the monster or some connection in traditional folklore. (When listing a monster name from one of the three books, (MM1) stands for *Monster Manual I*, (FF) stands for the FIEND FOLIO® tome, and (MM2) stands for *Monster Manual II*.)

Undead variations of skeletons include the huecuva (FF) and animal skeleton (MM2). A skeleton variation that is a normal monster is the crypt thing (FF).

Monsters with an affinity for skeletons include the bone devil (MM1), eye of fear and flame (FF), babau demon (MM2), and the galley beggar, an unusual ghost found mostly in the north of England. It was first mentioned in Reginald Scot's book: *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584). A galley beggar is a very thin spirit, often looking like a skeleton. Its main purpose seems to be to terrify anyone it encounters; in fact, the first part of its name, "galley," means to frighten or scare. Galley beggars have the same game statistics as do phantoms (Mon-



## Galley Beggar

ster Manual II, page 100).

Ruth Tongue, in *Folklore Society County Publications* (vol. VIII), reports a headless galley beggar that used to toboggan on a hurdle down the hill between Over and Nether Stowey, his head tucked firmly under his skeleton arm and shrieking with laughter. It was only on dark nights that he rode, but a strange light surrounded him, and he would slide, yelling with laughter, right down into the street between the two villages.

The galley beggar is a ghost in the traditional sense and bears no relation to the ghost of the AD&D game. The DM can use a galley beggar in an adventure to make the skeleton guards of a treasure more effective (since only those characters who made their saving throws against fear could confront the skeletons).

Galley beggars favor strange, almost zany antics. Their senses of humor are both macabre and frightening. Including them is an easy way to add an unusual element to any adventure.

## Zombies

Zombies are dead bodies brought back to a semblance of life by magic. They are little more than walking corpses. Zombies

are based on traditional voodoo myths, especially those from the island of Haiti. Voodooism is a strange combination of African and Roman Catholic beliefs, with a bit of American Indian lore and European occult practices thrown in. Voodoo is based on certain African religions whose practitioners believe they can temporarily be possessed by their various gods and goddesses. Voodoo has strong connections to sorcery, witchcraft, and magic.

A voodoo worshiper believes that the spirit of a god cannot take over his body unless his soul is first displaced. The soul is believed to consist of two spirits: the *gros-bon-ange* (big good angel) and the *ti-bon-ange* (little good angel). The *ti-bon-ange* is like a person's conscience. The *gros-bon-ange* is his essential soul, everything that makes him a unique individual.

Without the *gros-bon-ange*, the *ti-bon-ange* and the body lose contact. The *gros-bon-ange* is displaced during possession and also leaves the body after death. Great care is taken to provide the disembodied soul with a safe alternative dwelling place. The soul is recalled by the *hungan*, the voodoo priest, during a special ceremony and placed in a sacred jar. It then becomes an ancestral spirit that will advise and protect the *hungan's* family.

Zombies are created by *bokors*, evil

voodoo sorcerers. A bokor gains control of the *gros-bon-ange* of a dying person by sucking out the soul magically, trapping it in a magic vessel, or substituting the soul of an insect or small animal for the human soul. At midnight on the day of burial, the bokor goes with his assistants to the grave, opens it, and calls the victim's name. Because the bokor holds his soul, the dead person must lift his head and answer. As he does so, the bokor passes the bottle containing the *gros-bon-ange* under the victim's nose for a single brief instant. The dead person is then reanimated. Dragging him from the tomb, the bokor chains the dead person's wrists and beats him about the head to revive him further. Then he carefully closes the tomb so no one will notice it has been disturbed.

Led by the bokor and his assistants, the victim is first taken past his own home. It is believed that this trip will insure that the victim never again recognizes his home or tries to return there. Finally, the corpse is taken to the bokor's house or a voodoo temple, and there is given a secret drug. The drug may be an extract of poisonous plants like *datura* or *belladonna*, used by slaves in colonial times to kill their masters. The zombie is then a corpse-slave, held in thrall to the bokor.

The zombie walks with a distinctive shambling gait. It has an extremely low intelligence and can only follow the simplest orders, and it keeps its eyes down-cast. If it talks at all, it will babble gibberish in a nasal voice. Usually, the zombie does not answer if spoken to and is bereft of the usual marks of sanity.

One of the most sensational "true" zombie tales was related by Constant Polynice to William Seabrook, as recounted in his book, *The Magic Island*. The spring of 1918 was a big cane season for Hasco, the Haitian-American Sugar Company. The factory, which owned various plantations, offered a bonus for new workers.

One morning an old black headman, Ti Joseph of Colombier, appeared leading a band of raggedly dressed people who shuffled along behind him, staring dumbly like people walking in a daze. As Joseph lined them up for registration, they all stared, vacant-eyed like cattle, and made no reply when asked to give their names.

Joseph said they were ignorant people from the slopes of Morne-au-Diable, a roadless mountain district near the Dominican border, and that they did not understand the Creole dialect of the plains. They were frightened, he said, by the din and smoke of the great factory, but under his direction they would work hard in the fields. The farther they were sent from the factory, from the bustle of the railroad yards where most of the workers congregated, the better it would be.

Ti Joseph's workers were assigned to distant fields beyond the crossroads, and they camped there, keeping to themselves. In the evening, when each village group of workers gathered around one big common

pot of food, Joseph's group always had two pots, one for him and his wife Croyance, the other for the workers. The food made for the workers was tasteless and unseasoned — for, as Ti Joseph knew, zombies must never be permitted to taste salt or meat. Salt is generally believed to be the best ingredient to restore a zombie's memories, but it must be ingested.

One Sunday morning, Joseph left for Port-au-Prince as usual, with his pockets full of money. It was lonely in the fields with just zombies for company, and Croyance was filled with pity for the poor creatures. "Perhaps it will cheer them a little to see the happy crowds and processions at Croix de Bouquet," she thought. Since all the Morne-au-Diable people had gone back to the mountains to celebrate Fete Dieu at home, no one was likely to recognize a dead relative's face among the zombies.

When noontime came and Croyance sat eating savory dried herring and biscuits with a cup of wine, she pitied the zombies even more. They did not seem to be having any fun. Every day they worked faithfully in the cane fields and brought Joseph money, but the zombies got nothing. Then a woman passed by crying, "*Tablettes! Tablettes pistaches! T'ois pour dix cobs!*" Tablettes are a sort of candy with the size and shape of cookies, made with brown cane sugar. Sometimes they have pistaches (peanuts in Haiti) or have coriander seed. Croyance thought, "These tablettes are not salted or seasoned; they are sweet and can do no harm to the zombies just this once."

But the baker of the tablettes had salted the pistache nuts before stirring them into the dough. As the zombies tasted the salt, they knew that they were dead and made a dreadful outcry. Arising, they turned their faces toward the mountain where lay their own homes. No one dared stop them, and they shuffled out of town and soon disappeared down the path toward the mountain. When these walking dead drew near their own village on the slopes of Morne-au-Diable, the people of the village recognized among them fathers, brothers, wives, and daughters whom they had buried months before. Most of the villagers realized the truth — that these were zombies who had been dragged from their graves. But others hoped that a blessed miracle had taken place and rushed forward to greet the returned loved ones.

But the zombies shuffled through the marketplace, recognizing no one. As they turned left up the path leading to the graveyard, a woman whose daughter was in the procession of the dead threw herself screaming in front of the girl, clinging to the girl's shuffling feet and begging her daughter to stay. But the grave-cold feet of her daughter and the other dead tramped over her, and the zombies continued onward.

As the zombies neared the graveyard, they began to shuffle faster and then rushed among the graves. Each went to its

own empty grave and began clawing at the stones and earth to enter it again. But as their cold hands touched the earth of their own graves, the zombies fell and lay there, now rotting carrion.

That night, the people of the village, after restoring the bodies to their graves, sent a messenger on muleback down the mountain. He returned the next day with the name of Ti Joseph and a stolen shirt which had been worn next to Ti Joseph's skin. From the shirt, the villagers made a deadly *ouanga* fetish to gain their revenge. Just in case the *ouanga* was slow to work, they also set an ambush for the man. Soon afterward, Joseph was found on a lonely path. His head had been hacked off with a machete.

The most feared consequence of releasing a zombie from bondage is that the zombie will seek revenge before returning to the grave. The revenge could be merely physical, in that the zombie tracks down the bokor to kill him. The bokor could run or hide, but the zombie is tireless and will eventually find him. The zombie could even attack the bokor magically, turning the sorcerer's own magic against him.

Unlike most superstitions, zombie tales continue to be current. The late dictator of Haiti, Dr. Francois Duvalier, had a private army that was dubbed the *tontons macoute*, after the name of a kind of traveling voodoo magician. Many Haitians believed that some of the soldiers were actually zombies under the control of "Papa Doc" Duvalier.

Zombies are unnatural creatures to begin with. One simple variation of the listing is a zombie that must be literally chopped apart before it stops attacking. Even then, it can be a nuisance. Dismembered hands will grab victims; severed heads will bite. Such zombies might be termed "walking dead." Walking dead are superzombies, more difficult to stop than normal ones because they are both stronger and harder.

### **WALKING DEAD**

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FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: 2-12

ARMOR CLASS: 8

MOVE: 6"

HIT DICE: 6

% IN LAIR: *Nil*

TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*

NO OF ATTACKS: 1

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-12

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: *See below*

INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*

ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*

SIZE: *M*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Walking dead are undead animated corpses that keep attacking until completely destroyed. Like zombies, they are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and cold-based spells. Their six hit dice represent

### **Lesser Colossus**



their extreme tenacity. As the walking dead take damage, however, they become less effective (as they start losing vital parts of their bodies). For every 9 hp damage a walking dead takes (9 hp being the equivalent of losing 2 HD), it gains a -2 to hit and does -2 hp damage (minimum damage is zero hit points). Clerics have the same chances to turn walking dead as they do wights.

A classic modern horror picture with zombielike monsters is George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (which is part of a trilogy that includes *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead*). In these movies, the man-eating zombies that stalk the night can only be killed by a shot or blow to the head.

This idea actually makes more logical sense in the AD&D game than it does in the movies. The life-force magically animating the corpse might be mystically contained in only one part of the body (something like a *magic jar* spell). The zombie would be invulnerable to all attacks except those against the area holding the animating force.

### HUNGRY DEAD

FREQUENCY: *Rare*  
NO. APPEARING: 2-20  
ARMOR CLASS: 8  
MOVE: 6"  
HIT DICE: 2  
% IN LAIR: *Nil*  
TREASURE TYPE: *Nil*  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-6  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Nil*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *See below*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Non-*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*  
SIZE: *M*  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

The hungry dead are undead corpses that return from the grave to feed off the living. Like zombies, they fight until destroyed or turned away, and are immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and cold-based spells.

The return of the hungry dead is usually triggered by an evil magic-user or cleric. The animating force is always concentrated in one single area of the body. Except in that area, the hungry dead are immune to physical attack. The area of concentration is usually the head but at the DM's discretion could be any part of the body (heart, stomach, etc.).

Hungry dead look exactly like zombies. At first, however, "to hit" rolls of a natural 19 or 20 are needed to affect them (simulating an attack to one particular area of the body). After the first attack accidentally succeeds, the characters will realize the problem and try to aim for the vulnerable area; thus, all natural rolls of 15-20 will

	LESSER COLOSSUS	GREATER COLOSSUS
FREQUENCY:	<i>Very rare</i>	<i>Very rare</i>
NO. APPEARING:	1-2	1
ARMOR CLASS:	8	8
MOVE:	12"	18"
HIT DICE:	11 (50 hp)	33 (150 hp)
% IN LAIR:	<i>Nil</i>	<i>Nil</i>
TREASURE TYPE:	<i>Nil</i>	<i>Nil</i>
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	3-18	10-60
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	<i>Nil</i>	<i>Nil</i>
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	<i>Nil</i>	<i>Nil</i>
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Standard</i>
INTELLIGENCE:	<i>Non-</i>	<i>Non-</i>
ALIGNMENT:	<i>Neutral evil</i>	<i>Neutral evil</i>
SIZE:	<i>L (11' tall)</i>	<i>L (33' tall)</i>
PSIONIC ABILITY:	<i>Nil</i>	<i>Nil</i>

now hit the vital area.

Note that hungry dead do less damage per attack than zombies. Furthermore, such is their unnatural hunger that once a victim is slain, 2-5 hungry dead will stop attacking to feed on the slain victim. Hungry dead will not eat other undead, only fresh slain corpses.

Clerics have the same chances to turn hungry dead as they do ghouls.

In a story entitled "The Colossus of Ylourgne" by Clark Ashton Smith, the evil Nathaire created a terrifying giant undead creature. "The Colossus of Ylourgne" was first published in the magazine *Weird Tales* (June, 1934) and has since been published in hardback and paperback as part of the collection of stories entitled *Genius Loci and Other Tales*.

Nathaire was a powerful alchemist, astrologer, and necromancer. Working with his 10 students, he robbed a graveyard of all its corpses. In a kind of magical assembly-line, the corpses were stripped of all clothing, then the flesh and bones were separated into separate vats and rendered down to a pliable mass. All the bones were then reshaped and rehardened to form a huge skeleton. Finally, the skeleton was once again fleshed out. The separate ingredients were thus used to create a giant zombie. Along similar lines, the lesser and greater colossus herein may be added to the AD&D game.

A colossus is essentially a giant zombie magically made from many corpses. A lesser colossus is about 11' tall (between the size of a hill giant and a stone giant). A greater colossus is an amazing 33' tall (larger than the largest titan). Either one can rip up a whole tree to use as a club, doing double-normal damage. Otherwise, colossi use only their massive fists.

Colossi have the same invulnerabilities to magic and cold as do normal zombies, and they always lose initiative from their slowness. Holy water does 2-8 hp damage to

them. A cleric has the same chance to turn a lesser colossus as he would a mummy. The greater colossus is in the "special" category regarding turning it away by a cleric.

Note that the actual Colossus of Ylourgne and many other monsters and characters created by Clark Ashton Smith appear in the section on Averroigne, which is part of the D&D module X2 *Castle Amber (Chateau d'Amberville)*. While most sections of that module were completely made-up, the Averroigne section was based on the Averroigne stories of Clark Ashton Smith and was written with the express permission of the Clark Ashton Smith estate.

A skeletal version of this monster, the bone colossus, appears in the AD&D module GDQ 1-7 *Queen of the Spiders*, page 111. This colossus even regenerates its wounds!

Le Grand Zombi means "the great zombie." Le Grand Zombi would be a kind of king of the zombies. Unlike normal zombies, Le Grand Zombi would be intelligent and could even cast spells. It has been speculated that Le Grand Zombi is actually a kind of lich, the spirit of an extremely powerful magic-user/cleric who specialized in necromancy (magic dealing with the dead).

### LE GRAND ZOMBI

FREQUENCY: *Unique*  
NO. APPEARING: 1  
ARMOR CLASS: -3  
MOVE: 9"  
HIT DICE: 13 (65 hp)  
% IN LAIR: 25%  
TREASURE TYPE: *E*  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 2  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-20  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Spells*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *+1 or better weapon*

to hit  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 25%  
INTELLIGENCE: *Supra-genius*  
ALIGNMENT: *Neutral evil*  
SIZE: M  
PSIONIC ABILITY: 200  
Attack/Defense Modes: All/all

Le Grand Zombi looks like the worst moldering zombie. It is able to control all skeletons and zombies (and all their undead variants), being a sort of lord of the undead. Le Grand Zombi's main attack form is its ability to cast spells as if a 22nd-level magic-user/cleric. Instead of choosing 84 different spells, it is easier for the DM to consider Le Grand Zombi to have any first-through sixth-level magic-user or clerical spell it needs. Higher-level spells for Le Grand Zombi follow:

<b>Seventh-level</b>	<b>Seventh-level</b>
<b>clerical</b>	<b>magic-user</b>
<i>Destruction</i>	<i>Mass invisibility</i>
<i>Unholy word</i>	<i>Phase door</i>
<i>Wither</i>	<i>Power word, stun</i>

<b>Eighth-level</b>	<b>Ninth-level</b>
<b>magic-user</b>	<b>magic-user</b>
<i>Mind blank</i>	<i>Imprisonment</i>
<i>Power word, blind</i>	<i>Energy drain</i>
<i>Trap the soul</i>	<i>Power word, kill</i>

In addition, Le Grand Zombi has all the **monster summoning** spells (I-VII). The spells will only summon variants of skeletons and zombies as shown below:

Spell	Summons
I	2-16 skeletons
II	2-12 zombies, skleros, or shock bones
III	2-8 dry bones or hungry dead
IV	1-6 bloody bones
V	1-4 walking dead
VI	1-4 gem eyes
VII	1-2 lesser colossi

If Le Grand Zombi attacks physically, it does 1-20 hp damage, but it prefers to use spells. Le Grand Zombi can only be hit by magical weapons, has 25% magic resistance, 200 psionic ability points, and all psionic attack and defense modes. Le Grand Zombi is in the "special" class for a cleric's chance to turn it away.

Undead variations of zombies include the coffer corpse (FF), son of Kyuss (FF), juju zombie (MM2), and monster zombie (MM2). A normal monster variation of the zombie is the yellow musk zombie (FF).

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## Ghouls

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The word "ghoul" comes from the Arabic word **ghul**, used to refer to a kind of demon of the wilderness. **Ghul** itself is derived from **ghala**, which means "to seize." In Oriental folklore, a ghoul is an evil spirit that robs graves and feeds on

the flesh of the dead. It is thought to be an inferior order of the jinn (jinnée or genie in the singular, djinni in the AD&D game). The jinn is a race of a variety of different beings created out of black smokeless fire. The usual dwelling places of jinn are ruined houses, water cisterns, rivers, wells, crossroads, and marketplaces. Iblis is the father of the jinn and their chief.

Ghouls inhabit lonely places, not only graveyards but also deserts and isolated mountains. In many ways, ghouls are the personifications of the terrors of the wasteland. Ghouls also personify the horror of starvation and forced cannibalism. In their true forms, ghouls are usually hideous and loathsome, with fangs and talons. Sometimes one may have only one eye or a set of wings growing out of its back. But ghouls generally share the powers of jinns, which not only include invisibility but also shapeshifting. Ghouls can thus take on the semblance of human beings and quite often do so.

Theoretically, a ghoul could be of either sex. Perhaps because of the strong patriarchal nature of Islam, in most tales the ghoul is a female. Sometimes the ghoul appears as a beautiful woman; at other times, it appears more like its true form — half-woman and half-fiend. In female form, the ghoul can even bear children. It is often represented as luring travelers out of the way to lonely and remote ruins, where it falls upon them suddenly and devours them, greedily sucking the warm blood from their veins and sharing the flesh with its children.

There are several tales of ghouls in *The Thousand and One Nights*, the classic collection of Arabic and Persian folktales (sometimes also titled *The Arabian Nights*). Two such tales are "The Story of the Prince and the Ghoul" and "The Story of Sidi Nouman." But the legends do not belong only to the remote past. Mathias de Giraldo recounts a story he was told in his travels about a more recent ghoul (*Histoire cureuse et pittoresque* . . . etc., published in 1846).

About the beginning of the 15th century, in a pleasant suburb of Bagdad, lived an elderly merchant and his only son. Having amassed a considerable fortune, the merchant naturally wanted grandchildren, and he decided to arrange a match with the daughter of an old friend. Unfortunately, the lady was far from comely. Upon being shown her portrait, the son, Abdul-Hassan, asked for a delay that he might consider the proposed union.

One evening, Abdul-Hassan was rambling alone by moonlight through the countryside near his father's house. While contemplating the impending marriage, he heard a voice of enchanting sweetness singing love lyrics with great skill and tenderness to the accompaniment of a lute. Following the music, he came to a small but elegant house. Unable to contain himself, Abdul-Hassan leapt over a garden wall and managed to hide in the garden.

From his vantage point, he saw a maiden of extraordinary beauty seated on the balcony above him. For most of the night he watched and listened, fascinated by her enchanting voice and dazzling charms.

On the following morning, Abdul-Hassan proceeded to make inquiries concerning the lady. Eventually, he learned that she was the only daughter of an eminent philosopher. Though the father's learning was profound, he had little wealth and could afford only the poorest dowry for his child. The lady, who was a paragon instructed in every art and science, was thus unmarried.

All thoughts of the prearranged marriage fled from Abdul-Hassan's mind. Instead, he told his father what had happened and begged that he might choose his own wife. The doting merchant found it impossible to deny his son's request. The next day, he visited the house of the philosopher and made formal arrangements for the marriage.

After a brief courtship, the marriage was celebrated with much splendor. Several weeks passed in a state of extreme happiness — yet Abdul-Hassan noted that his wife Nadilla would never partake of an evening meal. She excused herself by explaining that she had become used to the frugal and severe diet forced upon her when she was growing up.

One night, however, after a few weeks had passed, Abdul-Hassan awoke from a deep sleep to find that he was alone in the bed. At first he took no heed, but he grew anxious as the hours passed. His bride did not return to bed until shortly before dawn. On the following night, he only pretended to sleep and carefully watched his wife instead. After she believed him to be soundly asleep, she quietly got out of bed, threw on a long dark cloak, and silently slipped away. Abdul-Hassan hurriedly dressed and followed her. To his surprise, she soon left the main streets of the town and made her way to a remote cemetery reported to be haunted.

Tracking Nadilla carefully, he saw that she entered a large vault. With the utmost caution, he ventured to steal a glance inside. The vault was dimly lit by three funerary lamps, and to his horror, he beheld his young and beautiful wife seated with a party of hideous ghouls, about to partake of a loathsome feast. One of these monsters brought in a corpse which had been buried that day; the corpse was quickly torn to pieces by the company, which devoured the reeking gobbets with every evidence of satisfaction amusing themselves meanwhile with mutual embraces and the drone of a mocking dirge.

Fearing to be caught by the ghouls, Abdul-Hassan fled back to his house as fast as he could. When his wife returned, he appeared to be soundly asleep. Throughout the whole of the next day, he gave no sign of what he had discovered. In the evening, as Nadilla was excusing herself

from joining him at supper, he insisted that she stay and eat; she steadfastly declined. At last, filled with anger and disgust, Abdul-Hassan cried out, "So then you prefer to keep your appetite for your supper with the ghouls!"

Nadilla turned pale; her eyes blazed, and she shook with fury. But she gave him no reply and retired to bed in silence. However, about midnight, when she thought that her husband was fast asleep, she exclaimed, "Now, wretch, receive the punishment for thy curiosity!" At the same time, she set her knee firmly on his chest, seized him by the throat, with her sharp nail tore open a vein and greedily began to drink his blood.

Abdul-Hassan managed to slip from beneath her. Springing to his feet, he struck her with a sharp knife with which he had been careful to arm himself. Nadilla fell down, mortally wounded, at the side of the bed. Abdul-Hassan called for help, and the wound in his throat was dressed. On the following day, the remains of his wife were duly interred.

However, three nights afterward, although the doors were locked, Nadilla appeared at exactly twelve o'clock in her husband's room. She attacked him with superhuman strength and ferocity, tearing at his throat. His dagger proved useless now, and his one chance for safety lay in speedy flight. Somehow managing to escape, he gathered a group of armed friends. Together they tracked Nadilla to the tomb where she was now living. Despite her strength and fury, the men managed to overcome the ghoul.

A great pyre of dry wood was built, with frankincense, aloes, and costly spices added. The corpse, writhing and foaming at the mouth, was placed on the pyre and reduced to ashes, which were collected and scattered on the Tigris River to be carried away and dispersed amid the waves of the Persian Sea.

Since so many ghouls are female in Arabic folklore, I have used **ghulah**, the feminine form of **ghul**, to refer to Oriental ghouls.

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## GHULA

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FREQUENCY: *Rare*  
NO. APPEARING: 2-20  
ARMOR CLASS: 5  
MOVE: 12"  
HIT DICE: 5  
% IN LAIR: 25%  
TREASURE TYPE: *E*  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-12  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Spells*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Very*  
ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic evil*  
SIZE: *M*  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Ghulah are Oriental ghouls (especially of Arabic-Persian tradition). They usually appear as either beautiful women or hideous half-woman, half-monster creatures. Ghulah are evil kinfolk to djinn. They cannot be affected by *sleep*, *charm*, or *hold* spells. They have the power to cast the magical spells of *invisibility* and *polymorph self*. Clerics have the same chances to turn ghulah as they would ghouls.

While the roots for ghouls lie in Oriental mythology, the popular concept of the ghoul in fantasy literature and gaming has been strongly influenced by the writer H. P. Lovecraft. Lovecraft's ghouls are not evil spirits but a terrifying race of quasi humans who live in vast mazes of underground tunnels. The tunnel systems are, more often than not, under or near cemeteries and crypts. Ghouls only leave their tunnels in search of prey; usually they feast on corpses, but they are not above preying on the living.

Ghouls may once have been human, but their unspeakable practices have warped even their physical features. Other horrors live underground, mostly aberrant inhuman races that worship the Old Ones

— Lovecraft's bizarre alien gods. At some time in the past, the ghouls mated with some of these underground otherworldly races. The physical appearance of ghouls is both frightening and disgusting. An encounter with a ghoul can be enough to shatter the sanity of a normal person.

Inspired by H. P. Lovecraft, a number of writers have written horror stories with related backgrounds. These stories are generally grouped together to form the "Cthulhu Mythos" (so named because of the demon-god Cthulhu invented by H.P. Lovecraft). Most of the stories were written by friends and correspondents of H.P. Lovecraft in the 1930s, but recent writers have made their own contributions to the Cthulhu Mythos. The classic ghoul story by H.P. Lovecraft is "Pickman's Model," which can be found in the short-story collection entitled *The Dunwich Horror and Other Tales*. Ghouls, or the hints of ghouls, appear in other Lovecraft stories such as "The Rats in the Walls" (*The Dunwich Horror and Other Tales*) and "The Hound" (*Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*). The ghoul race and the hero of "Pickman's Model," Richard Upton Pickman, are also featured in the H.P. Lovecraft novel *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*. Other ghoul stories of the Cthulhu Mythos include "The Grinning Ghoul" by Robert Bloch (*Mysteries of the Worm*), "It Will Come to You" by Frank Belknap Long (*The Dark Beasts*), and "The Ghoul" by Clark Ashton Smith (*Other Dimensions*). Recent writers have continued the tradition of the ghoul in fiction with stories such as "Quietly Now" by Charles Grant, "Disturb Not My Slumbering Fair" by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (both collected in *Necropolis*), and "Problem Child" by Brian Lumley (in *Vampires, Werewolves, and*

*Other Monsters*).

The AD&D game monster ghast is essentially a variation of a ghoul, derived from the word "ghastly" which comes from the Anglo-Saxon *gastlic*, literally meaning "ghostly." The word "ghastly" suggests the horror aroused by the sight or suggestion of death (a good choice for a root word when inventing a type of undead). Ghouls are tougher and have more powers than ghouls yet are so like ghouls as to be completely indistinguishable from them (except for their smell).

In the AD&D game, the ghoul marks a change in the game function of the undead. Skeletons and zombies threaten characters by sheer numbers. With ghouls, the emphasis begins to shift to the terrifying powers of the undead. Ghouls roam in packs, and their numbers can still be deadly. But their paralyzing touch is even more deadly and introduces an element of extreme randomness into combat. A string of lucky hits by the ghouls coupled with unlucky saving throws by the characters can suddenly decimate a party.

Ghouls have affinities both to zombies and vampires. It would be as easy to classify the hungry dead mentioned earlier as a ghoul instead of as a zombie; in some myths, ghouls return from the dead and drink blood besides eating flesh.

A type of ghoul found in Haiti is the baka. A baka is similar to a zombie with several important differences. The corpse which forms a baka belonged to a member of a secret magical society that practices ritual cannibalism. The cannibalism is believed to give the eaters magical powers and is a form of necromancy.

While a baka has to be animated like a zombie, the baka is no mindless slave. In the realms of death, the dead person has merged with certain evil spirits and now has their powers. This supernatural monster can bring luck, power, or wealth to its master. But the baka must be treated in the proper manner (which includes a steady diet of fresh corpses), or the owner will be destroyed by uncontrollable magical energy. In fact, the baka is often quite willing to return from the grave to continue the horrid practices of its life.

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## BAKA

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FREQUENCY: *Very rare*  
NO. APPEARING: 2-16  
ARMOR CLASS: 6  
MOVE: 12"  
HIT DICE: 3  
% IN LAIR: 10%  
TREASURE TYPE: *C*  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1  
DAMAGE/ATTACKS: 1-8  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Spells*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*  
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *Standard*  
INTELLIGENCE: *Average*  
ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic evil*  
SIZE: *M*  
PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

Baka are the animated undead corpses of members of a secret cannibalistic society. They have gained some demonic magical powers and have the clerical spells *command* and *hold person*. Baka can influence the luck of their enemies. Anyone fighting a baka has a -1 to hit, to do damage, and to all saving throws for the duration of the combat.

Baka are essentially a variety of ghoul, and clerics have the same chances to turn them as they do ghouls. Like ghouls, baka are immune to *sleep* and *charm* spells.

In Greek legends, the gelloudes are a kind of female demon that steals and then devours young children. The prototype for the gelloudes was the maiden Gello whose ghost, according to the ancient poetess Sappho, returned after her untimely death and was said by the people of the isle of Lesbos to have caused the early deaths of children. By the 10th century A.D., Gello had become a demon of the Greek Orthodox Church. Her various minions were the gelloudes.

Just as a ghoul is the personification of the wilderness and the fear of cannibalism, the gelloudes are the personification of the fear of infant mortality. In cultures without modern medical techniques, infant mortality can result in a 20% death rate. With one out of five children being born dead or dying soon after birth, it is not surprising that the cause was attributed to demons.

In Greek folklore, gelloudes have 12½ secret names. The names (transliterated from the Greek) are: 1) Guloy — a form of Gello; 2) Mora — a kind of lamia; 3) Budzoy — a sucker of blood; 4) Marmaroy — “heart of stone”; 5) Petasis — “fly like a bird”; 6) Pelagia — “swim like a fish”; 7) Bordona — “swoop like a hawk”; 8) Apletoy — “insatiable”; 9) Khamodrakaina — “lurk like a snake”; 10) Anabardalaia — “soar like a hawk”; 11) Psychanaspatria — “snatcher of souls”; 12) Paidopniktria — “strangler of children”; and 12½) Strigla — a kind of stirge.

Gelloudes are related to lamias, stirges, type V demons, and succubi (all from MM1). While their prime purpose is to prey upon children, they are not limited to that function and are likely to attack anyone when the man-eating urge becomes too great.

## GELLOUDES

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*  
NO. APPEARING: 1-6  
ARMOR CLASS: 7  
MOVE: 6"/18"/12"  
HIT DICE: 5  
% IN LAIR: 5%  
TREASURE TYPE: 1  
NO. OF ATTACKS: 4  
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-4/1-4/1-6/1-6  
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Energy drain*  
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *Nil*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 50%  
INTELLIGENCE: *Average*  
ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic evil*  
SIZE: *L (7' tall)*  
PSIONIC ABILITY: 100  
Attack/Defense Modes: E/F/G

A gelloude is a kind of demon, with the lower body of a giant serpent and the upper body of a woman. The serpent body has a pair of scaly legs with webbed talons. The woman's hands end in claws; she has vampirelike canines. A gelloude has dragonlike wings that aid both flying and swimming.

Gelloude attack with hand claws (1-6 hp damage each) and foot talons (1-8 hp damage each). If any attack succeeds, the victim is pulled close to the demon but is not held. On the next round, if it gains the initiative, the gelloude can bite its victim (roll to hit at +2) and drain an energy level every round thereafter unless the victim breaks free of its bite, requiring an *open doors* strength roll. If the roll is not made, the victim can be struck on following rounds at +2 to hit with claws and talons (and automatically by the bite) until he breaks free. The victim gains no saving throw against the *energy drain*. As the victim loses energy levels, he seems to grow younger. When the victim has no levels or hit dice left, he dies.

This reverse aging is something of an illusion and is not necessarily permanent. If the victim dies from the attack, then the corpse will be that of a young child. If the victim can be freed before death from *energy draining*, he will immediately return to his normal age (the life-level loss is permanent).

As minor demons, the gelloudes rank in the “special” category when being turned by clerics.

One aspect of the topic of ghouls deals with creatures from the Negative Material plane that exist in spirit form. They seek to possess the material bodies of their victims and force them into ghoulish practices. The case of Constance Armande is related in Elliot O'Donnell's book *Werewolves*. It is supposed to have taken place in the French province of Brittany around the turn of the century.

A young girl named Constance Armande, much against the wishes of her family, took up spiritualism. At the seances, she evidently came into contact with earth-bound spirits of the lowest sort — murderers, lunatics, and worse. They attached themselves to her psyche and followed her back to her home, where they began systematically tormenting her. They rapped on walls and played similar poltergeist tricks. They invaded her dreams, causing her such frightening nightmares that she quickly feared sleep and would often wake up screaming. She told her parents that the evil spirits were trying to prevent her from waking, to keep her with them.

A spiritualist told her that her dreams were not dreams at all but projections. Constance had, at the seances, acquired the power of astral projection, but she had no control over the power and was being forced to project into areas controlled by evil entities. This projection was unconscious and usually happened during sleep.

A medical expert was consulted. His advice was that Constance immerse herself in recreation, seeing her symptoms as a kind of nervous breakdown. The girl went to the seaside for a vacation and attended all sorts of balls, concerts, and plays. But the annoyances and bad dreams continued.

Constance was a beautiful girl and had countless admirers. Eventually she became engaged to Alphonse Mabane, the only son of a wealthy widow. Shortly before the day of the wedding, Madame Mabane died of a stroke. Every one, especially Constance, was overwhelmed with grief. Preparations were made for an impressive funeral.

On the afternoon of the day before the funeral, Constance was struck with a violent headache. She went to her room to lie down in order to get rid of the pain. Two hours later, Madame Armande heard strange footsteps coming out of Constance's room and bounding down the stairs. Madame Armande ran to see who might be there and was astonished to see Constance — but a Constance she hardly recognized. Her daughter's eyes shone with beastlike ferocity, and a grim, savage expression distorted her face. She passed right by her mother without even noticing the woman. Her walk was a light, stealthy tread, utterly unlike her usual walk.

Madame Armande was too startled to stop Constance or even talk to the girl, who was gone before her mother could recover. Madame Armande told her husband what had happened, and he tried to find his daughter, but no one in the village had seen her.

About an hour before bedtime, there came a violent ringing at the front door bell. It was Alphonse Mabane, and he looked pale and ghostly.

“Have you found her?” Monsieur and Madame Armande cried, catching hold of him and dragging him into the hall.

Alphonse nodded. “Let me sit down a moment first,” he gasped. “It will give me time to collect my senses. My nerves are all to pieces!” He then proceeded to tell a horrifying story.

“When I heard that Constance was missing, I wanted to join the search for her. I was in my bedroom putting on my overcoat when my valet Jacques entered. His face was white as a sheet. He begged me to go with him upstairs, to the room where my mother was laid out ready for the funeral. We stopped outside the door. ‘Listen,’ he whispered, ‘do you hear that?’

“From inside the room came a curious noise like munching — a steady gnaw, gnaw, gnaw. We armed ourselves with

walking sticks and lights. Then, throwing open the door, we rushed into the room.

"The lid of the coffin was off, the corpse was lying huddled up on the floor, and crouching over it was Constance. For God's sake, don't ask me to describe more — the sounds we heard explain everything. When Constance saw us, she emitted a series of savage snarls, sprang at one of the maids, scratched her in the face, and before we could stop her, flew downstairs and out into the street. As soon as our shocked senses had sufficiently recovered, we started off in pursuit but have not been able to find a trace of her."

At the conclusion of Monsieur Mabane's story, the search was continued. The police were summoned, and a general hue and cry raised, with the result that Constance was eventually found in a cemetery digging frantically at a newly made grave. Brought to bay in the chase that ensued, Constance plunged into a river, was swept away by the current, and drowned.

A spirit-ghoul is a type of ghoul which is actually some poor unfortunate victim possessed by an evil entity. The entity warps the physical appearance of the person so that the individual looks like a ghoul. The possession attempt is a long drawn-out process and has no bearing in combat (i.e., the spirit cannot take over some other body during melee).

## SPIRIT-GHOUL

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*

NO. APPEARING: 1-6

ARMOR CLASS: 5

MOVE: 12"

HIT DICE: 3

% IN LAIR: 15%

TREASURE TYPE: *B, Q, T*

NO. OF ATTACKS: 3

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 3

SPECIAL ATTACKS: *Paralyzation*

SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*

MAGIC RESISTANCE: 20%

INTELLIGENCE: *Average*

ALIGNMENT *Chaotic evil*

SIZE: *M*

PSIONIC ABILITY: *Nil*

A spirit-ghoul is the end result of a human victim's possession by unknown demonic entities. Once so possessed, the victim becomes immune to *sleep* and *charm* spells, and has *paralyzation* powers like normal ghouls. Such spirit-ghouls look just like normal ghouls, and the two can often be found together in a pack. *Exorcism* will work against a spirit-ghoul. A detailed examination by a high-level cleric will reveal the possession. Thus, unlike normal ghouls, a spirit-ghoul is not necessarily doomed to be a ghoul forever. In fact, if a spirit-ghoul is knocked unconscious but not killed, it can be bound so that the demon can later be exorcised. A character killed by a spirit-ghoul does not risk becoming a ghoul. Clerics can turn



## Spirit-Ghoul

these spirit-ghouls as they can normal ghouls.

A monster related to ghouls is Black Annis. Her legend is part of the basis for the AD&D game monster annis (MM2). Black Annis is a man-eating hag with a blue face and iron claws. She is supposed to live in a cave in the Dane Hills in Leicestershire England. There was a great oak at the mouth of the cave in which she was said to hide; she would leap out from behind the oak to catch and devour travelers. The cave, which was called Black Annis' Bower Close, was supposed to have been dug out of the rock by her own nails.

On Easter Monday, it was the custom from early times to hold a drag-hunt from Annis' Bower to the Mayor of Leicester's house. A drag-hunt is an overland hunt in which the hounds follow the scent of a dead animal that has been dragged over the ground to make a trail. The bait dragged was a dead cat drenched in aniseed. The bait was symbolically important; aniseed is associated with the second part of Black Annis's name. Black Annis was also associated with a monstrous cat, a kind of pet or familiar. The drag-hunt custom died out at the end of the 18th century.

Ruth Tongue, in her *Forgotten Folk-Tales*

of the English Counties, reproduced a tale about Black Annis the hag, as told by an evacuee from Leicester in December 1941. The description seems to show that the tradition of Black Annis was still alive as late as World War II. The hag was said to be "ever so tall and had a blue face and had long white teeth." The hag ate people and only went out when it was dark. When Black Annis ground her teeth, people could hear her in time to bolt their doors. They kept well away from the windows, too, in case she reached inside and grabbed for villagers (which was why Leicestershire's cottages lacked a lot of big windows). When Black Annis howled, people could hear her five miles away. Even the poor folk who lived in huts fastened skins across the windows and put witch-herbs above them to keep Black Annis away.

Black Annis personifies the spirit of death and fears of the wilderness. It seems likely that she was once a goddess-figure that had to be ritually propitiated. Perhaps she was the dark side of Anu (Dana), a Celtic mother goddess. If so, it shows the staying power of memories of horror. The good aspects of the mother goddess (fertility, rebirth, and the cycle of the seasons) have been forgotten, and only the evil aspects remain.

Black Annis is a man-eating hag with a blue face and iron claws. Her cat is a giant cat, larger than a sabre-tooth tiger, having blue-black fur. While sunlight does neither Black Annis nor her cat any real harm, both of them prefer darkness and are normally encountered at night or in deep caverns.

Black Annis has the following spells: *darkness 15' radius*, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*, *dig*, *confusion*, and *animate dead*. Her cat has three attacks (claw/claw/bite); Black Annis

for the whole winter.

In Canadian Indian myths, Wendigo was a terrifying creature of the wilderness. Part god and part monster, the giant Wendigo roamed in search of human flesh. The Indians believed that anyone who saw Wendigo and lived had been forever marked by him and was bound to turn to cannibalism. Even thinking about him or saying his name aloud was dangerous. Hence, Wendigo was often referred to by epithets such as "the cold one" or "windwalker."

## WENDIGO

FREQUENCY: *Unique*  
 NO. APPEARING: 1  
 ARMOR CLASS: -5  
 MOVE: 24"  
 HIT DICE: 30 (135 hp)  
 % IN LAIR: Nil  
 TREASURE TYPE: Nil  
 NO. OF ATTACKS: 2  
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: 3-30  
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*  
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: *See below*  
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: 75%  
 INTELLIGENCE: *Supra-genius*  
 ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic evil*  
 SIZE: L (15' tall)  
 PSIONIC ABILITY: 250  
 Attack/Defense Modes: All/all

Wendigo sometimes appears as a giant spectral being, part human and part animal, but his appearance varies because Wendigo is so chaotic that his body constantly changes. Everyone who sees Wendigo sees him differently, since Wendigo's form reflects a person's deepest fears.

In addition to his physical attacks, Wendigo can *summon* 2-24 ghouls, 1-6 ghastrs, and 1-3 wind walkers, one group each per day. Wendigo can use this summoning power once per turn until, after three turns, he has summoned each kind of monster.

Anyone looking at Wendigo must save vs. spells or be affected by *fear*. If the save fails, the person must make a second saving throw against death magic. If this second save also fails, then the individual becomes a servant of Wendigo and will be under his complete control. The control can only be broken by reducing Wendigo to zero or less hit points, slaying him.

In Greek folklore, the callicantzari are hideous, man-eating monsters that sometimes take on human form. They are described differently in different regions of Greece, but in general there are two main types of them: small and large.

The small callicantzari are not man-eaters, and are less hideous to look at and less numerous than the larger variety. In fact, the small callicantzari are closer in nature to the European faerie races than to any kind of undead.

The larger callicantzari are malicious and deadly. Their size varies from human-size to twice the height of a cottage. Usually, they are about 6-8' tall.

Callicantzari have dead-black skin. Most of them are covered with a coat of shaggy black hair, but a bald variety is sometimes mentioned. Their heads are huge, out of all proportion to the rest of their bodies. Their faces are dark black, and their eyes glare redly. They have the ears of goats or asses. From their huge mouths, blood-red tongues loll out, flanked by ferocious-looking tusks. Their bodies are generally lean and tall, but some are shorter and thick-set.

	BLACK ANNIS	HER CAT
FREQUENCY:	<i>Unique</i>	<i>Unique</i>
NO. APPEARING:	1	1
ARMOR CLASS:	4	6
MOVE:	15"	18"
HIT DICE:	11	9
% IN LAIR:	50%	50%
TREASURE TYPE:	I,X	Nil
NO. OF ATTACKS:		3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2-12	2-8/2-8/2-16
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spells	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	50%	25%
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional	Average
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil	Neutral evil
SIZE:	L (10' tall)	L
PSIONIC ABILITY:	Nil	Nil

has only one, which could be either a physical attack or a spell. Black Annis is sometimes encountered alone, but her cat will be encountered only if the hag is also present.

Because of her close association with death, Black Annis could be considered an undead spirit seeking living victims. If so, she would be in the "special" category regarding turning. But Black Annis does not have to be a type of undead — she could merely be an evil spirit haunting the night. The final choice whether or not to make her undead is left strictly to the DM.

If ghouls personify the fear of the wilderness and Black Annis personifies the fear of death, Wendigo personifies the fear of cannibalism. The origin of Wendigo comes from the Indian tribes of Canada. The Canadian wilderness can be a terrifying place in the winter for people who have only a subsistence economy. Living by hunting is always a chancy life. There are times of plenty, but there are also times when game is scarce. During lean times, food can be gathered from the wild. During the winter, however, food is often unavailable. In the past, when there were few good methods of preserving food, there was the very real possibility that food would run out before spring. The problem was increased by the natural tension of people cooped up together

Anthropologists refer to the extreme fear of cannibalism, coupled with a kind of "cabin-fever," as Wendigo psychosis. They hypothesize that the fear itself, if it grew too great, might trigger a psychotic hallucination of Wendigo.

Indian myths of Wendigo were carried over into more modern Canadian folklore, though the single entity now became numerous creatures, half phantom and half beast, who live in the forests and prey on human beings, particularly children. These wendigos might be people who entered into a pact with certain evil spirits that lurk in the forest and help these people kill their victims. Perhaps these wendigos were humans gazed upon the mythical being Wendigo, as in the Indian myths.

The legend of this creature has been immortalized in Algernon Blackwood's short story "The Wendigo," first published in 1907. Versions of Wendigo have worked their way into some of the stories of the Cthulhu Mythos; in fact, the Old One named Ithaqua, the Wind Walker, is essentially a reworking of the Wendigo legends to fit into the mythos.

Like Black Annis, Wendigo is on the borderline between the undead and other kinds of monsters. Even if the DM chooses to consider Wendigo as undead, the monster would be too powerful to turn, so the choice makes little practical difference.

Callicantzari have the arms and hands of monkeys. Their nails are as long again as their fingers, and are curled like the talons of a vulture. Some have the legs of a goat or an ass, some have one human leg and one bestial one, and some have human legs with the foot so distorted that the toes come out where the heel should be. Hence, it is not surprising that these monsters are often lame, but even so, they are swift of foot and terrible in strength. They run with a peculiar shambling gait which, while appearing awkward, still allows them to run quickly.

Sometimes a callicantzaros (the singular form of callicantzari) appears to be a normal human; sometimes a callicantzaros appears in completely animal shape. In general, the callicantzari are neither wholly human nor wholly bestial but a blend of the two. It is possible that, in ancient times, "callicantzari" was a general term to describe animal-human combinations. Creatures like the centaurs, satyrs, and silenoi (like satyrs, but part ass) were specific kinds of callicantzari. If so, the generic meaning has long been lost, and callicantzari has evolved into a term to describe specific monsters.

From dawn to sunset, the callicantzari hide in dark and dank places — in caves or beneath mills — feeding on the loathsome food there (snakes, snails, insects, etc.). But at night, they issue forth and run wildly to and fro, rending and crushing those who cross their paths. Destruction, waste, greed, and lust mark their courses.

Despite their uncouth shapes, the monsters delight in dancing. Sometimes a person can trick them into dancing all night. But people must beware, for the callicantzari delight in the taste of human flesh.

Fortunately, the callicantzari are stupid, gullible, and extremely quarrelsome. They have little discipline or sense of planning, which adds an interesting aspect of role-playing to an adventure as the PCs try to figure out ways to trick these monsters. A smart, alert person usually has no difficulty getting the better of them, as the following story from the island of Scyros shows (related in *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion*, by John Cuthbert Lawson):

A man of Scyros was returning home from a mill late at night, driving his mule before him laden with two sacks of meal. When he had gone about halfway, he saw before him some callicantzari in his path. Realizing his danger, he at once got upon his mule and laid himself flat between the two sacks and covered himself up with a rug, so as to look like another sack of meal. Soon the callicantzari were about his mule, and he held his breath and heard one say, "Here is a pack on this side and a pack on that side, and the top-load in the middle, hut where is the man?"

So the callicantzari ran back to the mill thinking that the man had loitered behind. But they could not find him and came



## Wendigo

back after the mule, looked again, and said, "Here is a pack on this side and a pack on that side, and the top-load in the middle, but where is the man?"

So they ran on in front, fearing that he had hastened on home before his mule. But when they could not find him, they returned again, then went back a second time toward the mill. This went on many times.

The mule needed no one to guide it; it had traveled the path many times. While the callicantzari were running to and fro, the mule steadily trudged home. When the beast stopped at the door of the man's home, the callicantzari were close behind. The man called to his wife, and she opened the door and he entered safely.

When the callicantzari saw how he had tricked them, they knocked at the door in great anger. The woman, fearing that the monsters would break in by force, promised to let them in on the condition that they first count the holes in her sieve. To this they agreed, and she let the sieve down to them by a cord from an upper window. Straightaway, the monsters began to count the holes, and they counted round and round the outermost circle of holes in the sieve and so never got to the middle. Frustrated with the lengthy counting process, they only counted more and more hurriedly as a result.

Meanwhile, dawn was breaking. Soon the neighbors saw the callicantzari, and they hurried off to the priests and told them. The priests immediately set out with censers and sprinkling vessels in their hands to chase the callicantzari. The monsters fled right through town, spreading havoc in their path as they were hotly pursued by the priests. At last, when they were clear of the town, one callicantzaros began to lag behind, and by a great effort the foremost priest ran up to him and struck him on a hind foot with a sprinkling vessel. At once the foot fell off. The callicantzaros replaced it as best he could, but he got it on backward. Thus came about the phrase "callicantzaros foot," to describe their peculiar kind of lameness.

Callicantzari are on the borderland between the undead and other monsters. While the final choice of whether or not to make them undead is up to the DM, I have classed them as undead because, in legends, they operate only at night, can be scared away by unarmed clerics, take damage from holy water, are man-eaters, and traditionally appear only at the 12 days of Christmas — a time, like Halloween, when the barriers between the dead and the living are weak.

Callicantzari are a kind of undead mixture of animal and human traits. They have black skin and shaggy hair, oversized

## Callicantzaros



heads with goat ears, and red eyes. Their feet are either animal feet or distorted so that the heels are where the toes should be. Callicantzari are big, stupid, malicious man-eaters that roam at night seeking prey. Daylight does not actually hurt them, but they will avoid it if at all possible.

The traditional leader of the callicantzari is the Great Callicantzaros. He has the power of *confusion* (as per the magic-user spell, usable three times per day); anyone who fails the saving throw against it will be influenced toward mindless destruction, greed, and lust as long as the Great Callicantzaros is within sight. Clerics and cavaliers of good alignment, including paladins, are immune to the *confusion*. Any other character of good alignment gets a +2 on the saving throw.

The callicantzari are hopelessly stupid and easily tricked. They often work at cross-purposes since they are incapable of organized action. The Great Callicantzaros, by himself, acts in an intelligent manner. But even he cannot exert enough influence to alter the stupid behavior of his fellow callicantzari.

Clerics can turn callicantzari with the same chances as they have against wights. The Great Callicantzaros cannot be turned, but he will flee if the majority of the callicantzari flee. Holy water causes 2-8 hp damage per vial against callicantzari.



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	<b>CALLICANTZARI</b>	<b>GREAT CALLICANTZAROS</b>
FREQUENCY:	<i>Rare</i>	<i>Very rare</i>
NO APPEARING:	<i>2-20</i>	<i>1</i>
ARMOR CLASS:	<i>5</i>	<i>- 1</i>
MOVE:	<i>15"</i>	<i>18"</i>
HIT DICE:	<i>6</i>	<i>18 (90 hp)</i>
% IN LAIR:	<i>10%</i>	<i>10%</i>
TREASURE TYPE:	<i>D</i>	<i>I</i>
NO. OF ATTACKS:	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	<i>2-12</i>	<i>6-36</i>
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	<i>Nil</i>	<i>See below</i>
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	<i>Nil</i>	<i>Nil</i>
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Standard</i>
INTELLIGENCE:	<i>Low</i>	<i>Very</i>
ALIGNMENT:	<i>Neutral evil</i>	<i>Neutral evil</i>
SIZE:	<i>L (6-8' tall)</i>	<i>L (10'tall)</i>
PSIONIC ABILITY:	<i>Nil</i>	<i>Nil</i>

Undead variations of ghouls include the ghast (MM1) and sheet ghoul (FF). Ghoul variations which are not undead include the psrudoghou (MM2) and the pseudoghost (MM2).

Monsters that would have an affinity to ghouls Include the carnivorous ape (MM1),

centaur (MM1), satyr (MM1), djinni (MM1), werewolf (MM1), minotaur (MM1), ogre (MM1), troglodyte (MM1), troll (MM1), succubus (MM1), type V demon (MM1), windwalker (MM1), yeti (MM1), annis (MM2), and kech (MM2).



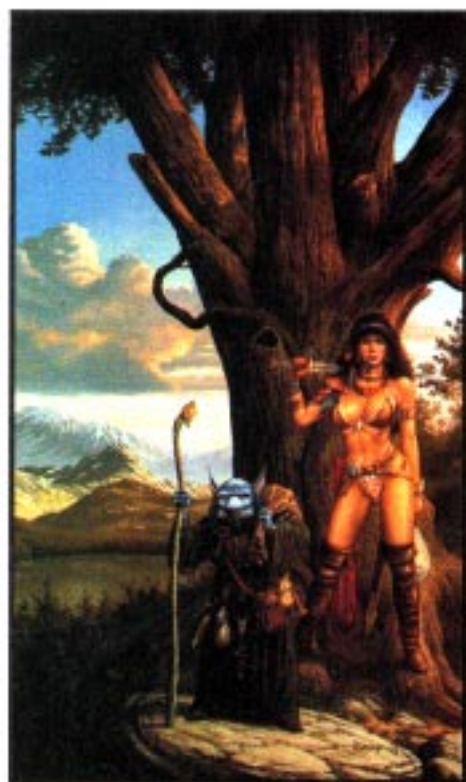
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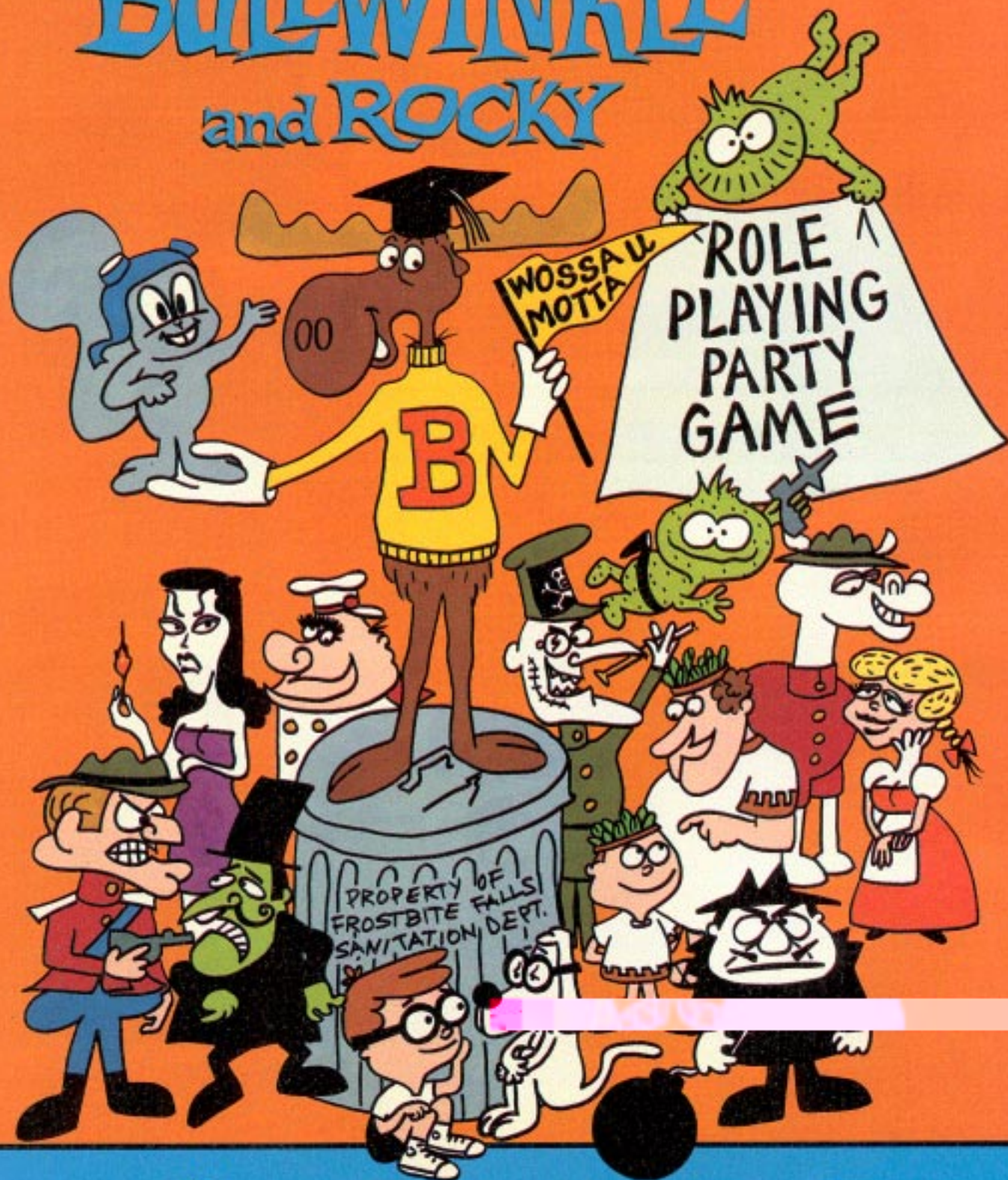
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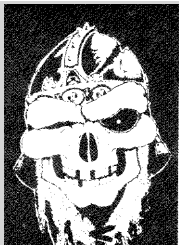
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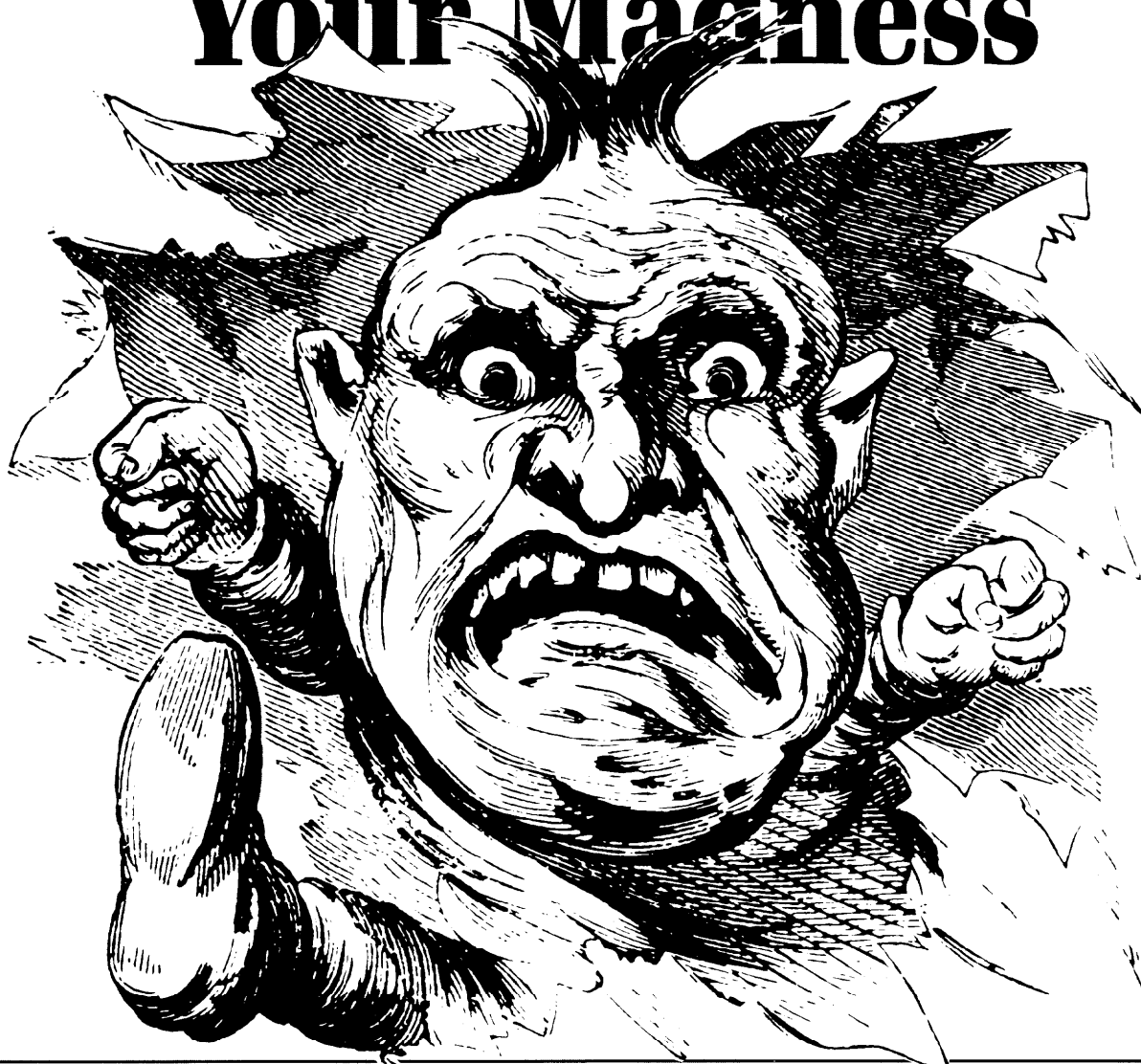
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by Ed Friedlander

# Methods to Your Madness



***New ways drive fantasy characters insane***

As a medical pathologist, I must often consider how mental changes in patients may have resulted from disease. In a similar way, this article reviews the role of insanity (actually, mental illness) in the AD&D® game, showing how it can be an appropriate part of an adventure game and offering some practical ways to make it playable.

## **Fantasy lunacy...**

Mental illness is a fairly common occurrence in fantasy fiction. It appears in Greek myths and in the epics of chivalry, including the Arthurian cycles, Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso," and Spenser's "The

Faerie Queene." Mary Shelley's Frankenstein describes the emotional torment of the original flesh golem. Stephen Donaldson, the son of a physician, incorporated psychiatry's insights into his contemporary adult fantasies, *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*.

Many things make AD&D game characters go crazy. The indigo layers of *prismatic spheres*, *walls*, and *sprays* cause insanity unless saving throws vs. wands are successful. Seeing a magic-user's *symbol of insanity* causes insanity (*confusion* in the *Players Handbook*), and so does tasting an *elixir of madness* or being attacked with a *scarab of insanity*. Mixing

types of magical eye-cusps or breathing the spores of myconids will cause acute psychosis. Very aberrant behaviors result from using certain magical items like *tridents of yearning*, *chimes of hunger*, or *eggs of desire*. Gary Gygax suggests that characters stranded for millennia on the Astral plane might become insane (see "The Astral Plane," in DRAGON® issue #67, page 29).

Depending on the campaign, insanity could have other causes. Slight variations of the *symbol of insanity* spell might produce different symptoms. Other magic-users may have researched new versions of *power word*, *eyebite* or *truename* spells

that cause insanity. The clerical *heal* spell cures most mental illnesses, so one use of its reverse (*harm*) might be to cause them. Certain *bestow curse*, *cause disease*, and glyph applications by imaginative clerics might cause brief mental illnesses. Illusionists probably have spells to cause hallucinations and delusions. (An illusionist using a valuable moonstone in the *chromatic orb* spell might cause *lunacy*.) The gaze of Stephen Inniss's durocib familiar causes insanity (DRAGON issue #86, page 21). So might the bite or gaze attacks of certain hordlings, demodands, slaadi, etc. Rogue modrons may be insane, and Ssendam calls himself "Lord of the Insane, whatever that means. Clerics of Azathoth are described as insane in the first edition of the DEITIES & DEMIGODS™ cyclopedia. The planes of Limbo may have many insane inhabitants.

Nearly any creature in the AD&D game can be affected by insanity. Kuo-toans are especially vulnerable, and magical frustrations can drive even elementals and aerial servants crazy. However, creatures with minds altogether unlike ours (creatures from the Positive and Negative Material planes, quasi-elementals, evil fungi, etc.) might be immune to insanity, and unintelligent creatures probably cannot go insane. Devas, most hierarch modrons, and the undead might never be affected. Very high intelligence, wisdom, or charisma scores might protect against some causes of insanity. *Serten's spell immunity* could offer some safety, and a *mind blank* spell might provide immunity to certain forms of acquired mental illness.

#### ...meets reality

Elaborate rules explain the effects of mental illness; twenty types are listed on pages 83-84 of the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, with the warning that the categories are not clinically correct. Yet insanity rarely appears in modules or gaming articles (the last DRAGON Magazine article on the subject was in issue #18), and I have not personally seen this illness used in any campaign. Why?

In our world, mental illness probably causes more unhappiness than even arthritis, heart disease, or cancer. Alcoholism (*dipsomania* in the *DMG*) causes havoc in one out of every three homes. Schizophrenia (known by numerous names in the *DMG*, including *dementia praecox*, *schizoid*, *hebephrenia*, *catatonia*, *hallucinatory insanity*, *delusional insanity*, and *paranoia*) affects millions of people who also lack adequate care. Schizophrenia itself is confused in the *DMG* with multiple personality, a different disorder which we now know to occur in victims of child abuse. Mental retardation (*feeble-mindedness*) affects many millions and has terrible effects on families. In our complex world, both adults and children are at risk for depression (*melancholia*) and suicide (*suicidal mania*). Mania, either alone or as part of a manic-depressive cyclic disorder,

cripples perhaps one adult in every two hundred. Even relatively minor problems like compulsive stealing (*kleptomania*), fear of public places (*agoraphobia*, surprisingly omitted from the *DMG*), and eating disturbances are major handicaps. And few would argue that pathological lying, sado-masochism, homicidal mania, or suicidal mania (see also the magic-user spell *Leomund's lamentable belabourment*) are particularly fun to role-play.

The *DMG* is a monumental work, and the AD&D game has brought enjoyment into the lives of many people. But real mental illness affects too many real people and should not be a part of any game. Insanity is very important in the CALL OF CTHULHU® game from Chaosium, Inc., but its creators selected kinds of insanity described in H.P. Lovecraft's fantasies, not those from medical psychiatry or pop psychology. The same thinking probably led the originators of the AD&D game to avoid clinical descriptions of physical

diseases. The elements of the *DMG's* list seldom reappear elsewhere (for example, basidiron psychosis does not resemble any of them).

#### The new system

When mental illness strikes a character, it should take a form drawn from heroic fiction, rather than one that may have touched the life of a player. Most fictional insanity involves the acquisition of single fixed ideas and the behaviors that result; insanity caused by magic should always be of this type. If insanity is to be used in a game, the simple options given in Table 1 are recommended. My experience suggests that players find these easy and enjoyable to role-play. Roll 1d12 for randomly distributed results; otherwise, select an appropriate result.

Exactly what the victim thinks about will be determined by what was happening at the time the insanity was acquired. No amount of arguing will restore an

**Table 1**  
**Random Insanity Table** (roll 1d12)

1. **Alter ego**: The victim manifests a second personality, having the same alignment but otherwise as radically opposite to his normal personality as can be. The second personality will remain in control until the insanity is cured.
2. **Creature complex**: The victim has the delusion of being a creature of an NPC race, usually a monster. His behavior will generally conform to the class of creature, though the victim will always be able to speak, move, and fight normally.
3. **Exaggerated fear**: The victim is abnormally fearful of some creature or situation, and he will flee or cower whenever confronted by it. The victim will also ask about this creature or situation in any conversation.
4. **Exaggerated hatred**: The victim conceives a loathing for some type of creature (not a character race or class) and will attack that creature without any reason or restraint. The victim raises the topic of that creature's existence in any conversation.
5. **Exaggerated liking**: The victim conceives a strong affection for some kind of creature. He speaks of this creature whenever possible.
6. **Exaggerated suspicions**: The victim suspects everyone of secretly being an enemy. He expresses his suspicions openly.
7. **Extreme suggestibility**: The victim is very easily influenced by others and gets no saving throw *vs.* any *charm*, *command*, or *suggestion* spell. Even nonmagical suggestions require a check *vs.* wisdom on 1d20 or the victim immediately obeys all but self-destructive commands.
8. **Fantasy role**: The victim thinks he has become some famous personage from myth or legend. The personage is not always powerful but is usually known to all local PCs as a "myth."
9. **Monty Haul syndrome**: The victim is deluded that he is an unbelievably powerful character. Depending on the flavor of the campaign, the victim might be the Emperor of Atlantis, 5,217th-level fighter-magic-user-thief, the ki-rin queen, or the like. Gods and religious leaders might be inappropriate choices.
10. **Quixotism**: The victim believes common objects to be wonders from heroic fantasy; a cheap inn is a palace, a washbowl is a magical helmet, windmills are evil cloud giants, etc. The victim will act accordingly with great enthusiasm.
11. **Visual hallucinations**: The victim sees enemies that are not there. This happens in any combat situation or whenever a saving throw or ability check is required.
12. **DM's choice**: The DM chooses from the above list or invents a type of fixation appropriate to the situation. The victim may openly and casually commit minor antisocial acts (localized arson or petty thievery), develop a peculiar craving (hang gliding, eating shrieker, owning an otyugh), or show an odd interest (alchemy for a fighter, archery for a cleric, dwarven history for a wood elf, etc.) Some groups enjoy rhyming or punning manias. Sexual aberrations are never appropriate choices.



insane person's insight. However, several basic rules set limits on the abnormal behavior. Insane characters can speak, move, and fight normally. They will not leave the party — even a victim of *exaggerated suspicions* who has been forcibly restrained will not desert his comrades. In no case will alignment behavior or religious faith be compromised, though lawful types may feel the need for an *atonement* when they recover.

Recognizing that another creature is insane may be easy or difficult, depending on the campaign and the DM's judgment. In our world, some psychotics are quite convincing. *Detect disease* or *ESP* spells may help, and so might *defect balance* or *psionic empathy* or *telepathy*. Once a character is recognized as insane, he receives an automatic -50% on most reaction dice, and no one will place any confidence in such victims, especially those with *creature complex* or *Monty Haul syndrome*. Needless to say, good-aligned party members should never allow an insane comrade to be humiliated, injured, or abandoned — perhaps an adventure in itself.

Using this system in practice, suppose the PCs are mind-blasted twice by hidden mind flayers, then attacked by wererats. The forms of insanity listed in Table 1 herein might affect a male dwarven fighter in the following ways:

1. The dwarf announces that he is an elven magic-user princess. He shaves his beard, looks for elven clothing for females, and blames his (constant) spell failures on magic resistance, magnetic forces, hostile dwarves, or whatever.

2. The dwarf announces he is a giant rat. He travels on all fours and occasionally squeaks. He tells everyone he meets about being a rat, then asks them for cheese.

3. The dwarf is suddenly terrified of all rats. He climbs on an elf's shoulders in dungeons to be safe. He tactlessly inquires about rats when seeking night lodgings. If any real rats appear, he flees screaming.

4. The dwarf starts making side trips to exterminate underdark rats, and soon buys larger and more dangerous weaponry with which to exterminate all rats everywhere.

5. The dwarf starts catching and taming rats. He shows his new pets to every stranger and starts a huge rat collection.

6. The dwarf starts accusing everyone else of conspiring with "those rats" to subvert everything decent and good.

7. The dwarf becomes uncharacteristically cooperative and tractable, and often obeys even the most stupid suggestions, such as "Go soak your head."

8. The dwarf starts introducing himself as the Pied Piper of Hamelin and offering his services. He buys a flute, which he plays (badly) while dancing (badly) whenever he meets rats.

9. The dwarf starts introducing himself as "Lord Rodent Ratslayer, King of the Multiverse, Boss of the Underdark." He gives orders to other PCs and literally laughs in the face of terrifying danger with absurd self-confidence.

10. The dwarf, whenever he becomes excited, attacks rocks and stalagmites, calling them "the giant rat Bubonus and its filthy minions."

11. The dwarf sees rats that aren't there. This happens during any hostile encounter, as well as when he stumbles, gets tired, and so forth. He attacks the "rats" in preference to any other opponents.

12. The DM has a choice and will take into consideration both the character of the dwarf and the personality of the player ("I must find . . . a shrubbery!" ).

The insanity table is referred to in the

DMG's section on *psionic* blast effects on nonpsionic creatures (page 78). These rules are cumbersome, and the attack results for a creature of a given intelligence and wisdom are too predictable. It is especially easy to kill creatures of animal intelligence; characters with wisdom and intelligence sums in the 30-33 range are typically *feeble-minded* by the first *psionic blast* and killed by the second. These rules are fun-spoilers.

The following is a new way to determine the results of psionic blasts on nonpsionic beings. For each such attack, roll 1d20 and add the result (plus bonuses) to the victim's intelligence. The sum determines the result on Table 2 of this article.

Insanity caused by a *psionic blast* strikes as soon as a current combat situation ends. Cavaliers and paladins, who are relatively immune to certain mental attacks, are allowed to retain 90% immunity to such insanity. Monks from the *Players Handbook* gain the bonuses given them on page 31 of that text. DMs may also want to add other DMG modifiers.

One advantage to this system is the ease to which it can be adapted on a character sheet. Thus, for a human fighter with intelligence 6, the following applies:

Roll	Result
15+	No effect
13-14	Temporary insanity
11-12	Permanent insanity
9-10	Rage
7-8	Attack nearest creature
5-6	Panic
3-4	Stun
2 or less	Coma

**Table 2**  
**Effects of Psionic Blasts on Nonpsionic Beings**

Sum	Result
21+	No effect
19-20	Temporary insanity (lasting one day per point of attack strength)
17-18	Permanent insanity
15-16	Rage (attacks own party if no opponents are available; lasts one round per point of attack strength)
13-14	Attacks nearest creature with weapon or spell (lasts one round per point of attack strength)
11-12	Panic (runs away; lasts one round per point of attack strength)
9-10	Stun (no attacks, -4 to AC and saving throws; lasts one round per point of attack strength)
7-8	Coma (but clearly alive; lasts one day per point of attack strength)
6 or less	Dead (automatically at -10 hp)
<b>Bonuses</b>	
+4	Dwarf, gnome, halfling, or dragon; <i>Serten's spell immunity</i> magic-user spell
+2	Elf or cleric
+1 to +4	High wisdom (15-18) bonus
-1 to -3	Low wisdom (7-3) penalty
-2	Surprised
-4	Kuo-toan
Others	DM's judgment; see <i>DMG</i> , page 78, "Saving Throw Dice Adjustments"
Immune	<i>Charmed</i> or insane characters; characters already affected by <i>mind blast</i> ; nonpsionic devas, modrons, and undead; all golems; <i>mind blank</i> magic-user spell, <i>amulet of life protection</i>

Whether or not psionics are retained in the rules revision, psionic blasts should remain as the mind-flayer and su-monster's distinctive attacks. Depending on the campaign, a *psionic blast* of any strength might affect a nonpsionic being, and the number of such attacks delivered per round or surprise segment could be limited to one.

### Curing insanity

Clerics give good counsel and — better yet — they heal. A shukenja's *calm* cures temporary insanity and might quiet all crazy people for a while. *Cure diseases* might help in some campaigns. Heal is the usual remedy for most forms of insanity and could probably reverse the effects of a *psionic blast*. The DMG (page 42) says that heal will not cure serious mental disorders not related to spells or inflicted by injury to the brain; however, *restoration* cures any and all forms of insanity (DMG, page 43), and a shukenja might cast *restore spirit* for similar results.

Using *restoration* to cure insanity would age a cleric three years. An alternative is suggested by the D&D game rules, which specify that casting *restoration* to restore a drained level temporarily drains the caster of one level, without unnatural aging. Instead of being aged, the cleric curing a particularly virulent mental illness might briefly acquire the patient's insanity.

Insanity caused by casting *contact other plane* should be very hard to cure, so that

magic-users will not rely on helpful clerics every time they cast this spell. *Restoration* should be required, and the cleric's illness should last for a number of days equal to the distance to the plane contacted. The cleric could adjust his fee accordingly.

The spell *cure insanity* exists in various unofficial forms in many game campaigns. Different DMs may place it at different spell levels and may require various material components, etc., depending on the innate curative powers of the spell. Its powers may overlap with *exorcism* in the AD&D game and with *dispel evil* in the D&D game.

### Cure Insanity (Necromantic) Reversible

Level: 4 Components: V,S

Range: Touch CT: 1 round

Duration: Perm. ST: None

AE: Creature touched

**Explanation/Description:** This spell immediately curses insanity due to most causes. The spell must be administered while the patient is exhibiting insane symptoms. It can also heal one conscious victim of the effects of *psionic blasts*, hallucination-causing spores, or a *confusion* spell. It will calm a river spirit-folk character (from *Oriental Adventures*) during flood time. The spell will not cure insanity brought about by casting a *contact other plane* spell, nor will it control behaviors caused by lycanthropy. The reverse, *cause insanity*, requires a touch, and a saving throw vs. spells (with wisdom

bonuses) is allowed. Victims roll on the Random Insanity Table herein, or the DM selects an appropriately bizarre response.

Certain lawful-good clerics might gain *cure insanity* as a second-level spell. Druids are devoted to preserving the balance (both natural and mental), and they gain the spell at third level. Devas can cast it once daily, and other great minions of good can use it even more often. The spell may damage or dispel certain creatures of Limbo, as the DM decides. Some chaotic clerics, such as those dedicated to Azathoth or Ssendam, gain *cause insanity* as a second-level spell. Tribal spell-casters can gain the spell normally in either form.

Referees can invent other magical items related to insanity. Certain cursed books can cause it in any reader; beneficial books can describe methods of detecting and curing it. A charge from a *staff of curing* might help a crazy person, and a *cure insanity* potion would be worth 300 xp and 500 gp. Scrolls of *protection from insanity* might require slaad blood for their manufacture. Perhaps the party will find a *couch of counseling* on which the reclining victim can ventilate his deepest emotions and thus be cured.

Mental illness in the AD&D game should be very different from its form in our world, both in symptoms and curability. To enjoy playing nutty characters, the madness must fit the environment.

Ω



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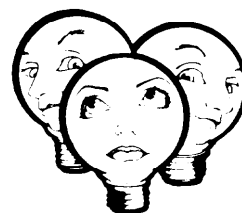
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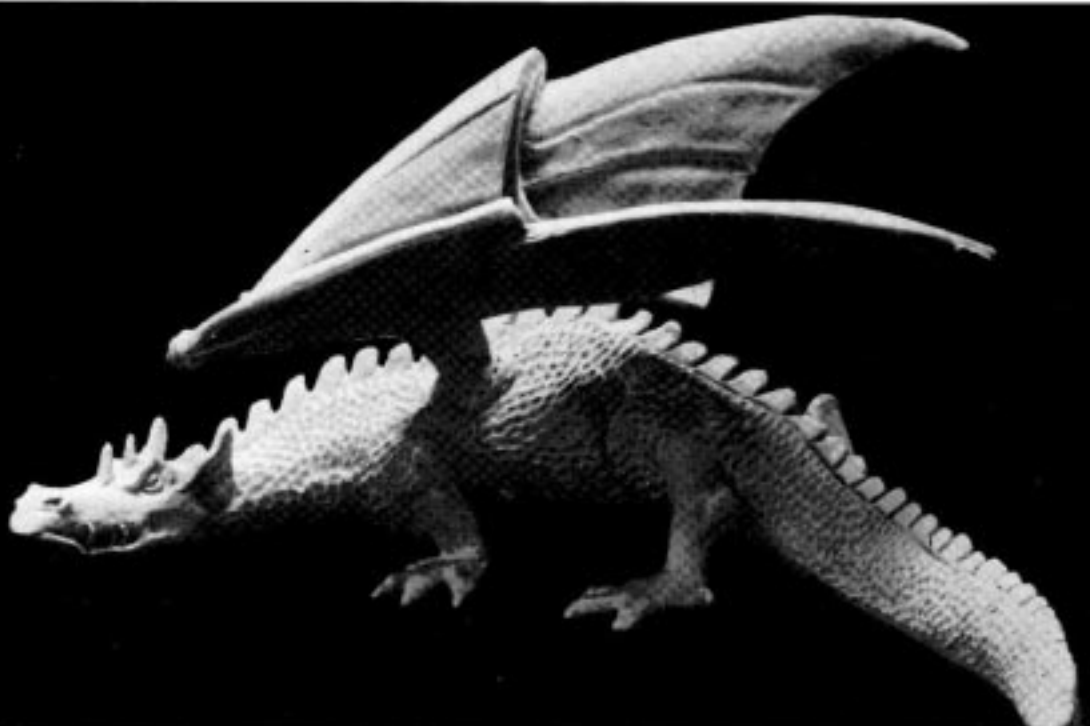
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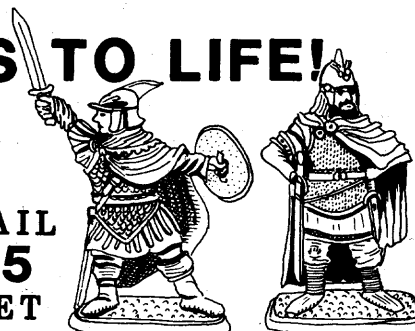
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by Eileen Lucas

# The End of the World

## *Of plagues, player characters, and campaign worlds*

Maybe you have an old, tired fantasy game campaign that's going nowhere, one that you and your players are really sick of and seems to be beyond hope. But you hate the thought of trashing it altogether, after all the work you've put into establishing cities, terrains, weather, etc. What can you do?

Well, perhaps a plague can help.

In a fantasy campaign, a raging epidemic (a disease which descends suddenly upon a community, burns itself out, and goes away) or pandemic (the worldwide occurrence of such a disease) can eliminate unwanted NPCs en masse. Political, economic, and social systems can be totally restructured. Countless new adventures with interesting twists for PCs can be introduced. Then, too, the physical aspects of the campaign that you like will remain unharmed, and your favorite NPCs can be miraculously saved — with your intervention, of course.

Historical precedent can guide you. Throughout history, civilization has been beset by numerous outbreaks of plagues of varying intensities. One of the worst of all plagues occurred during the Middle Ages, the time frame in which most AD&D® game campaigns are set. Known today as the Black Death, this plague raged across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East between 1346 and 1351, wiping out approximately one-third of the population of those regions (modern estimates range between one-quarter and one-half — higher in some limited areas). The purpose of this article is to give you, the DM, some historical information about the Black Death and to provide some ideas on how such an event might be incorporated into your campaign.

### **The mechanics of plague**

For the purposes of this article, the term "plague" refers to the bubonic plague and its variants. Commonly known to medieval man as the "great pestilence," the plague was often made up of several related diseases — bubonic, pneumonic, and septicemic plagues — each differing in the severity and speed with which they spread and killed. These different diseases were linked by a common origin (the bacillus carried by rats and fleas). As a result, the type of plague in any given area changed from one sort to another in a confusing fashion, sometimes changing with the seasons. At times, only one type would infect an area, while all three might be present simultaneously in other regions. Generally, the plague worked its havoc in 3-6 months and dissipated, but in some places, particularly in regions with high population densities, it seemed to disappear, only to flare up again in a month or so (often after winter) and hang on for another year.

As a general rule, symptoms of the plague appeared rapidly. Chills, high fever, restlessness, a staggering walk, and mental confusion were followed by prostration, delirium, shock, and coma. The different types of plague produced further and differing symptoms, but all were characterized by their contagious and fatal natures.

Bubonic plague was the first type of plague to appear. It was characterized by buboes (swellings of lymph nodes) behind the ear, in the armpit, and in the groin. These swellings often grew to the sizes of eggs or apples and were very painful; they were followed by black or red spots like bruises appearing anywhere on the body,

as a result of hemorrhaging under the skin. There was a 33% chance that the swellings would discharge and heal, leading to the patient's recovery. Otherwise, the afflicted died within six days.

Somewhere along the way, bubonic plague often developed into pneumonic plague, which was much more contagious because it was spread by the breath of the carrier. Its primary characteristics were the spitting of blood (from severe lung infection) and a painful death that occurred within two days. The coughing up of blood became equated with almost certain death. In both types of plague, an extremely foul odor was given off by the body of the victim and everything which issued from it (breath, sweat, blood, etc.). Understandably, depression and despair were common among such victims, sometimes leading to the point of madness.

Occasionally, the most potent form of plague, septicemic plague, appeared simultaneously. This variation involved a massive infection of the bloodstream and often killed too quickly for symptoms to be relevant; the victim would be fine one minute, then rapidly exhibit one symptom of plague and die within hours. Buboes had no time to form. "Geoffrey the Baker wrote of people who went peacefully to bed and were dead the next morning, while Simon of Covino described priests or doctors who were seized by the plague whilst administering spiritual aid, and, often by a single touch or a single breath of the plague-stricken, perished even before the sick person they had come to assist."<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, this type was less frequent than the rest.

To determine whether or not a character contracts the plague, consult the disease rules and tables listed on pages 13-14 of the *Dungeon Masters Guide*. Use the table entitled "Chance of Contracting Disease" on page 13 to determine this chance. Use the table entitled "Adjustments to Occurrence and Severity Die Rolls" on page 14 as a modification to the chance of contracting the plague, based on constitution and other factors.

Each PC has a chance of being immune to the plague bacillus; if his constitution score or less is rolled on 1d100, the PC is immune to the plague. If it is determined that a character has contracted the plague, consult Table 1 in this article to determine what type of plague the character catches. Then consult Table 2 to determine the resulting effects and survival chances. If the DM so desires, characters may be given an additional fighting (or losing) chance against the plague by applying the modifications listed in the "Adjustments to Occurrence and Severity Die Rolls" table on page 14 of the *DMG*. In this case, the figures listed there are applied to the die roll prior to consulting the "Chance of survival" column in Table 2 herein. Table 3 is provided as a suggested encounter table for use in cities stricken by plague; this table may be used or altered at the DM's



**Table 1**  
**Type of Plague Contracted**

**1d8 Plague type**

1-4	Bubonic plague
5-7	Pneumonic plague
8	Septicemic plague

discretion, depending on campaign circumstances.

All rolls for plague type and survival should be made in secret. Whether or not a PC is doomed to die from the plague, the DM should roll the appropriate dice as if the character were to die from the malady anyway, thus determining the time until the infection reaches its worst point. During that time, the DM applies the appropriate penalties to the PC as given in Table 2. PCs who survive the plague recover from the penalties in time, but they heal at the usual rates (magic may help). Lost ability points are recovered at the rate of one point every two days.

### The causes of plague

Of course, the people of the Middle Ages didn't know that there were three different types of plague. All they knew was that people were dying by the thousands all around them because of some horrible sickness. They also didn't know the truth about what caused this dreadful sickness, what caused it to spread, or what cured it. They did have some ideas about these things — most of which were wrong and some of which were as destructive as the plague itself.

The actual culprits of the plague were rats and fleas. The rat was the carrier of the plague-causing bacillus (*Yersinia pestis*). The plague was passed from rats to the fleas that bit them; the fleas then passed the plague along to humans by biting them as well. The number of rats and fleas in a given area correlated highly with the number of plague deaths. With both rats and fleas in plentiful supply in the 14th century, the bacillus had plenty of carriers.

The plague had actually been endemic (i.e., confined to certain local areas) in many parts of the world for centuries before a number of factors combined to provoke the disaster that was the Black Death. The 11th and 12th centuries in Europe had been a time of relative prosperity and economic growth. During that time, the population of Europe grew at a rate that exceeded agricultural production. With the latter half of the 13th century and the opening of the 14th century, the tides began to turn and things began to get rough for those already living at subsistence levels. "In the great population centers, from which the peasantry could or would not move, the end of the thirteenth century was a period of acute

crisis. Distracted by wars, weakened by malnutrition, exhausted by his struggle to win a living from his inadequate portion of ever less fertile land, the medieval peasant was ready to succumb even before the blow had fallen."<sup>2</sup> Add to this problem the peculiarities of climate (intense cold and severe rainfall) and a series of disastrous harvests, and you had a set of conditions that were ripe intellectually, emotionally, and physically for a plague of monstrous proportions to strike.

At least some of these conditions should be present in a fantasy game campaign before a full-scale plague is introduced. Whether the DM sticks with the historical causes of plague in his campaign (i.e., rats and fleas) or creates a unique cause of his own (such as a curse or other magic-related cause), some clues as to the plague's origins should be prepared for inquisitive PCs. Much of the information should be confusing and misleading, much as it was in medieval times.

Some of the causes of the plague suggested by contemporaries of the Black Death included the belief that something foul in the air was drifting across the world (possibly fumes released from below the ground by earthquakes), that God was destroying mankind for mankind's sins, and that various groups were poisoning wells and food sources. In many instances, these theories were combined and twisted together. Thus, while God or the movements of the planets might have caused the plague to germinate, human agents were accused of contributing to its spread.

### Plague and society

If you've ever read *The Mask of the Red Death* by Edgar Allan Poe, you have some idea of the panic inspired by this terrifying disease. The wealthy and powerful are likely to stop at nothing to insure their own safety, even to the point of murder. In *A Distant Mirror*, Barbara Richman tells of a manor lord who found out that plague had broken out in the nearby village. In order to keep the disease from spreading to his manor, he had the entire village burned.

People have a tendency to look for someone to blame whenever anything goes wrong, and the Middle Ages were no different. During the Black Death, Jews were often accused of poisoning wells and were terribly persecuted as a result; old, single women were often labeled as witches, blamed for the disaster, and slain. Any minor and unpopular fantasy cult or group would be a likely target for such accusations. For example, picture a village in which dwarves are disliked. Into this village rides a group of adventurers, one of whom is a dwarf. Several days later, the innkeeper's wife comes down with the plague. Who's the most likely suspect for its cause? Our dear dwarf may have to get out of town, and fast.

Given the pressures of disaster, local prejudices are likely to become exaggerated. Additionally, superstition and prejudice are not functions of rational minds; therefore, the conclusions drawn as a result are only rarely entirely logical. Worse yet, in a fantasy campaign there are fantastic beings and spell-casters around that can cause disease or otherwise torment humanity. Imagine how many insane wizards and evil high priests there are in the average fantasy campaign (not to mention demons and the like). If an innocent magic-user produces a cloud of foul-smelling smoke prior to a plague outbreak, he would be instantly suspected of bringing on the disease.

One must keep in mind the magnitude of the Black Death to understand the effects of fear and panic on the people of the 14th century. In one London neighborhood during a two-month period in 1349, some 200 people were buried in one particular cemetery *every day*. Multiply that by the number of neighborhoods, the number of counties, and the number of countries, and you begin to see why people became so irrational. They literally believed the world was ending.

### Introducing the plague

Where did the Black Death really begin? Historians seem to agree that it started somewhere in Central Asia and was spread by invaders and merchants into the eastern Mediterranean region, then eventually into Europe.

The story of the siege of Caffa (Kaffa) in the 1340s is illustrative of one possibility of how the plague traveled to Europe. The town of Caffa on the Black Sea was under attack by Tartars when bubonic plague broke out among the Italians taking refuge there. There were stories of the bodies of plague victims being catapulted over the walls by both sides to spread the infection, with the result leading to so many deaths on both sides that the siege had to be lifted. The Tartars dispersed, carrying the plague to Russia, India, and China, while Italian traders escaped by ship to Genoa, bringing the plague to Europe with them. It is said that plague deaths began the day after the traders' ships dropped anchor in Genoa.

There are many ways to introduce the plague into a fantasy campaign. For example, a ship may sail into a major seaport with disease-carrying rodents on board. Infected sailors on shore leave, rodents scurrying to land even quicker than the sailors, and goods (with infected fleas snuggled up inside) that are delivered to local shops are three subsequent ways the plague then arrives. For more dramatic effect, a mysterious ship might arrive in the harbor — the captain dead at the wheel, the sailors slumped over their oars, and only the rats left alive. In the confined quarters of a ship at sea, plague could easily have such an effect (there were

actual cases of such “ghost ships” roaming the seas or running aground with all aboard dead). If no seaport exists, an overland caravan or travelers on foot or horseback can do the trick easily enough. Finally, if you don’t want your campaign world to be decimated by plague but want your PCs to experience one, you might have them travel, knowingly or unknowingly, to a land already stricken with the disease.

Plague years are a bad time to wage war, as the transportation of troops and supplies provides a great method of transporting the disease. Some historians believe that Scotland might have escaped the plague except that the Scots decided to attack England while that country suffered from the plague. Upon the return of the soldiers to Scotland, the plague was introduced to this previously untainted country. Movement of troops between England and France in the Hundred Years War also contributed to the spread of the disease, to the extent that there were long periods during which the plague caused the war to be put on hold.

However the plague arrives, tie it in with other circumstantial events (such as earthquakes, unseasonable weather, changes in political leadership, the arrival of new religious groups, etc.) and you’ll create a confused hodge-podge of possible causes which simulate the historical circumstances behind the real plague. Attempts to relate the plague to other events in an area were common, and superstition tended to muddle things up even worse. For example, if a new ruler comes to power (particularly if by force) and the plague breaks out, some opposing group may suggest that the gods are not in favor of the new leader, and thus call for his execution. Or, if an earthquake is followed by an outbreak of plague, the panic-stricken folk of a community may fear that the end of the world is near, and this belief could give rise to all kinds of strange activities.

One of the most eccentric groups in existence during the Black Death was that of the flagellants. Believing that the end of the world was coming, these men and

**And no bells tolled, and nobody wept no matter what his loss because almost everyone expected death. . . . And people said and believed, “This is the end of the world.”**

A chronicler of Siena  
writing of the Black Death

women sought to divert the attention of God from the sinful ways of the world by acts of public penance. They would walk in long processions (often lasting for a month at a time) from town to town, chanting and praying. “Dressed in cowed white robes with red crosses on their chests, the Flagellants did not shave, bathe, or change clothing while involved in a procession. When they would come to a town, they would form circles and beat upon their backs with scourges, rejoicing and singing as they did so. Some women had cloths ready to catch the blood and smear it on their faces, saying it was miraculous blood.”<sup>3</sup> After such a performance, the flagellants would move on to another town and repeat the scenario. Sometimes their processions got out of hand, and they were given to even wilder acts than those that they protested.

#### Prevention and treatment

Consider the following poem:

Ring a ring of roses,  
A pocket full of posies,  
Achoo, Achoo,  
All fall down.

As the forerunner of what is now a chant in a simple children’s game we call “Ring Around the Rosie,” this seemingly innocent rhyme speaks of the hopelessness of trying to stave off the plague. Despite precautions like placing a ring of rose petals around oneself or carrying pockets full of flowers, simply being sneezed upon by another person could often lead to death.

The best prevention against the plague was isolation. If the PCs in a plague-infested area can totally isolate them-

selves, they can reduce their risks of infection. But remember that anyone or anything with which they come in contact might harbor rats or fleas and is thus a potential plague-carrier.

Failing complete isolation, high constitution scores might provide some kind of protection against the disease (perhaps +1 or +2 to saving throws). Like many diseases, plague was most devastating to the malnourished and sickly, which was one of the reasons the poor suffered a high mortality rate (although no class or social group was completely immune). Of course, magical devices preventing illness would also be of help.

Just as there was no real knowledge of what caused the plague, the ability to treat it was limited. Physical as well as spiritual attempts to deal with the sickness were often made, generally with little effect. Worse yet, attempts at treatment were hampered by the victim’s foul smell and the sight of buboes and sores. Comeliness and charisma scores would definitely fall (perhaps by as much as -3 to -6 points) to reflect this. The symptoms of the disease were often so awful as to inspire disgust rather than pity.

Although medical understanding of the causes of infection was lacking during the Black Death, it was obvious to any observer that going near those who were sick tended to increase the chances that you would get sick, too. Even the clothes and personal possessions of the afflicted were feared; people believed that by touching the sick or dead, one could catch the dread disease. Actually, there was some truth in this, because any infected fleas hanging around the victim might just jump on and bite anyone else who came close enough. Thus the sick were often left

**Table 2**  
**Effects of Different Types of Plague**

Name (major symptoms)	Chance of survival (onset of death)	Penalties
Bubonic (buboes with black or red bruises)	33% (death in 3-6 days)	Class 1
Pneumonic (spitting of blood)	25% (death in 8-48 hours)	Class 2
Septicemic (vomiting and rapid disability)	20% (death in 3-12 turns)	Class 3

Class 1 penalty: -10% of normal hit-point total (down to 90% of normal total) and -1 point from strength, constitution, and dexterity (down to scores of 3 each) per six hours.

Class 2 penalty: -10% of normal hit-point total (down to 90% of normal total) and -1 point from strength, constitution, and dexterity (down to scores of 3 each) per hour.

Class 3 penalty: -10% of normal hit-point total (down to 90% of normal total) and -1 point from strength, constitution, and dexterity (down to scores of 3 each) per five rounds.

Survival chances and the times until the onset of death have been altered somewhat for use within game campaigns and may not match real-world values for the same.

alone to suffer, and even family members deserted their kin because of fear, superstition, and the survival instinct. Many a local priest fled to avoid risking his own health by caring for others. If the characters come upon a community already in the throes of plague, it is very possible that the local clerics will have fled, as well as many others who formerly served as leaders of the community.

On the other hand, there were many stories of kind souls who did minister to those in need. "In Italy, some members of the clergy took a part in the fight against the plague. Especially the friars made a valuable contribution to the work of the health authorities, often braving conditions of unspeakable horror and nearly always at the risk of their own lives."<sup>4</sup> Records are scarce, however, because most of those who helped also died. But then, there was often the general impression that everyone was going to die anyway. Characters of good alignment in the AD&D game should feel some motivation to help the sufferers of plague, though the practical means by which others could be helped may be few indeed.

And yet this belief that all will die can also bring out the worst in people. "If we're all going to die, we might as well have fun" was a common school of thought. Thus, plenty of thieves and bandits could be found robbing the bodies and uninhabited homes of the deceased. In addition, strange hedonistic cults were formed by groups of people who followed the "party till the plague gets you" line of reasoning.

Every statement involving the cause of the plague produced a multitude of reactions from people. For example, it was commonly believed that Gods displeasure with man had something to do with the plague. One typical reaction among NPCs in a fantasy campaign would be a turning away from the gods believed to have abandoned them (as happened on Krynn in the DRAGONLANCE® novels after the Cataclysm). On the other hand, some may be moved to try everything in their power to

turn the displeasure of the powers that be into a more favorable attitude by prayer and good works. Those who are saved may attribute it to their gods' favors and become even more devoted in worship. The DM must determine which direction his populace is likely to go (and there may not be a consensus) based on the role of religion and religious leaders in his world.

In an AD&D game world, magic is very likely to come into play in relation to the plague. The use of magic in treating the plague would generally take on the form of prayers or incantations (or combinations of the two), with the possible use of magical items. Both clerics and magic-users come heavily into play here, as religion and pure magic are closely intertwined in matters of disease. The belief that some god or demon is responsible for this terrible occurrence usually leads to the belief that these otherworldly beings might be influenced to bring relief.

An example of a mystical practice of the era in question might be as follows: Write a special prayer with some specific substance (perhaps blood or ink made from an herb with healing properties) on the inside of a cup, then fill the cup with water. After the inscription has dissolved, the water should be drunk or bathed in. Another remedy might read as follows: Take one pinch of bayberries that have been dried in the sun for a day and beaten to a powder. Mix with ale or wine, and drink. Then sweat a goodly amount, and follow with a long sleep. Whether such cures actually work is up to the DM to decide; in a magical world, everyone will sooner or later attempt to use magical means to save themselves.

Other "cures" abounded. Intentional vomiting as a purge was often recommended. Whole, peeled onions were also laid on the floor around the bed (or even in the bed) of a sick person, in order to soak up the evil humors. Tubs of butter-milk might do the same; if the milk curdled, it was a good sign that the milk had absorbed some of the "plague stuff." Repeating holy names with praises over

and over was also believed to help. And carrying the remains of a holy person or some holy object couldn't hurt, either.

Sapphires and rubies were believed to be of particular use in warding off the plague. These could be worn on rings or pendants, or placed in a cup from which water would be drunk. Flowers and herbs were thought to be helpful in warding off the disease, and if nothing else, they helped to cover the foul stench of the sickness. Streets would often be strewn with fragrant herbs before any kind of procession would be allowed to pass. The DM should exercise imagination in providing creative preventions and treatments for the plague.

### Aftermath

There were a multitude of changes after the Black Death, some a direct result of the disaster and others being more secondary in nature. Underpopulation was the first and most obvious result. As time went on, most of the political, social, economic, religious, and cultural systems were challenged and changed.

Depopulation itself was a complex situation. There were fewer people around to work the fields, so many crops were left to rot, and fewer fields were planted in subsequent years. But there were fewer people to feed, too, so starvation was not usually a problem, except where there were people with no access to food due to the breakdown in markets and transportation. As a result of this labor shortage, free men could demand higher wages; it was also easier for serfs to slip away from feudal bonds and become free men. The landlord's position became more difficult to manage (for those landlords who survived), and legislation to keep this more independent low and middle class in line contributed to later agitation by peasantry for even more freedom. Such a situation could be replicated in a game setting, leading to the downfall of autocracies.

Because the plague took on different forms at different times and places (sometimes being more virulent than at others), the mortality rates varied from place to place. It is entirely possible for a large town in your campaign world to be heavily visited, a small village to be entirely depopulated (between death and flight), and an isolated hamlet to be totally untouched. Groups living in close quarters (such as in monasteries, ships, and soldiers' barracks) are in great danger of being completely wiped out unless precautions are taken. During the Black Death, up to two-thirds of the population of major cities (with populations of 10,000 to 100,000) would perish; some small towns were abandoned and overgrown.

As Boccaccio, a survivor of the Black Death, wrote in *The Decameron*, the confusion of the plague years continued in the aftermath: "Various fears and superstitions arose among the survivors, almost all of which tended toward one end — to flee

**Table 3**

#### Random Urban Encounters During a Plague

1d20	Encounter
1-2	Soothsayer of prophet of doom
3-5	Death cart hauling bodies of the dead
6-8	Town guard looking for disease carriers
9-10	Beggar (1) or bandit (1-4)
11-14	Dead body (50% likely to have no possessions of any value)
15-17	Raving sick man or woman
18-20	Pack of rats

When a random encounter in a plague-stricken urban area is called for, consult this table instead of the normal encounter tables 50% of the time. All infected beings increase the risk of infection among PCs by 10% if approached within 5'. The game statistics for these encounters should be constructed by the DM, as appropriate to the urban area in question.

from the sick and whatever had belonged to them. Gathering in those houses where no one had been ill, they shut themselves in. They ate moderately, avoiding luxuriousness, with music and whatever simple delights they could have . . . allowing no one to speak to them, and avoiding news of either death or sickness. . . . Others, arriving at a contrary conclusion, held that plenty of drinking and enjoyment, singing and free living, and gratification of the appetite in every possible way, was the best course."<sup>5</sup>

Although the landowner's position became more challenging in terms of finding hired hands, there was suddenly much more land available. PCs may find large ownerless estates ripe for the taking. After the Black Death, there were many newly orphaned or widowed female landowners looking for a strong male to take the place of the deceased head of the house.

Another complication of life in a post-plague world involves the depletion of livestock and other animals. "In the countryside peasants dropped dead on the roads, in the fields, in their houses. Survivors in growing helplessness fell into apathy, leaving ripe wheat uncut and livestock untended. Oxen and asses, sheep and goats, pigs and chickens ran wild, and they too . . . succumbed to the pest. . . . In remote Dalmatia bolder wolves descended upon a plague-stricken city and attacked human survivors. For want of herdsman, cattle strayed from place to place and died in hedgerows and ditches."<sup>6</sup> Generally tame animals may go wild, and wild animals may become emboldened by massive depopulation.

But rather than *causing* things to change, a plague is more likely to accelerate and exaggerate changes already in the works. Keep this in mind when picking up the pieces of your campaign after the plague has worked its worst. These trends will tend to be reinforced by other minor recurrences of plague in the future (perhaps every 4d6 years or so).

Exactly what kinds of changes take place depend upon the circumstances of your own campaign. Are you tired of a particular ruling family? Perhaps a war of succession might follow the plague as a result of the demise of many of the most likely candidates. If the local temple was having a hard time getting people to worship and financially support its particular god, the situation might be made better if the clerics were helpful during the disaster (or worse, if they were not). Perhaps one of the PC clerics helped a town during the plague; afterward, he might be asked to stay and set up a new shrine or temple.

The role of PCs in this postplague world depends on what they did during the plague. Did they survive because they hid out? Perhaps now they'll want to explore and conquer depopulated areas. Mercenaries will certainly be needed to fill the depleted ranks of local armies. Clerics

**Poor and rich went together; there was no other way of burials . . . for coffins were not to be had for the prodigious numbers that fell in such a calamity as this.**

*A Journal of the Plague Year, Daniel Defoe*

might rise to the tops of their orders because of vacancies above them.

On the other hand, the PCs may find themselves hunted down for crimes committed during the disaster. Perhaps they will be blamed and hounded from place to place. Much depends on the direction the DM wishes to see his campaign take.

Finally, remember that although the Black Death was one of the worst outbreaks of plague in the history of civilization, your campaign world need not be subjected to an outbreak of such horrific proportions. Many milder occurrences preceded and followed the Black Death; your characters can face varying degrees of this experience as suits your needs. You *can* have just a small plague, if you'd like.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death*, (New York: The John Day Co., 1969), page 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, page 30.

<sup>3</sup> Robert S. Gottfried, *The Black Death*, (New York: The Free Press, 1983), page 69.

<sup>4</sup> Carlo M. Cipolla, *Faith, Reason, and the*

*Plague in Seventeenth Century Tuscany*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979), page 1.

<sup>5</sup> Gottfried, *The Black Death*, page 78.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), page 98.

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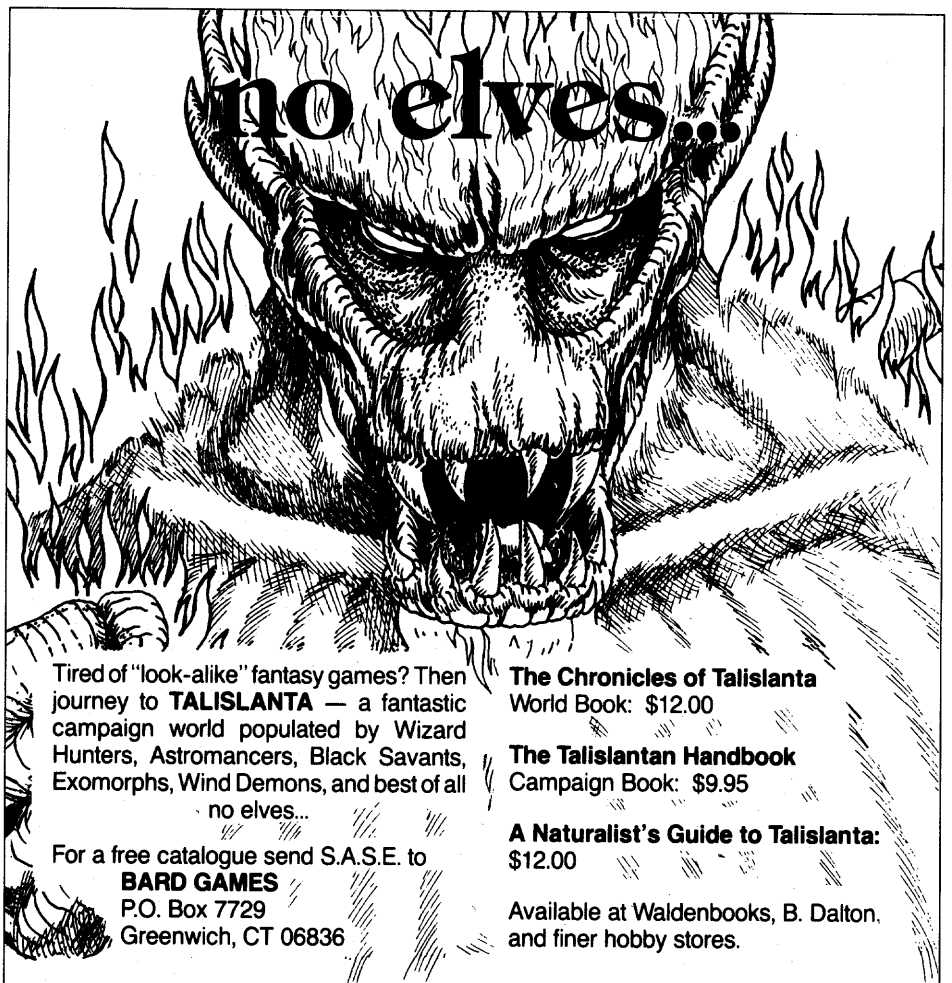
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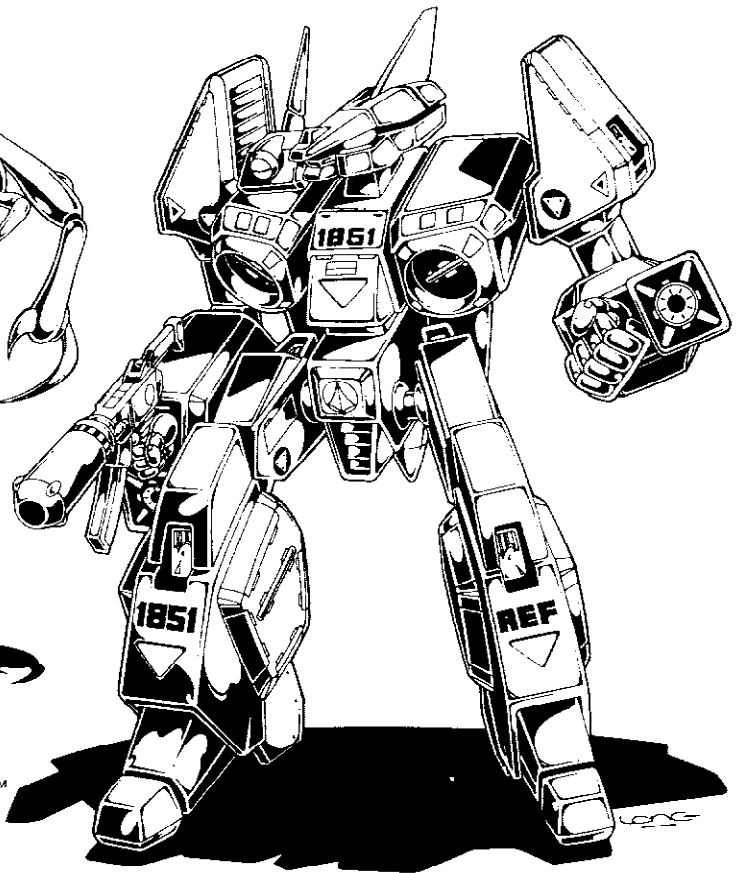
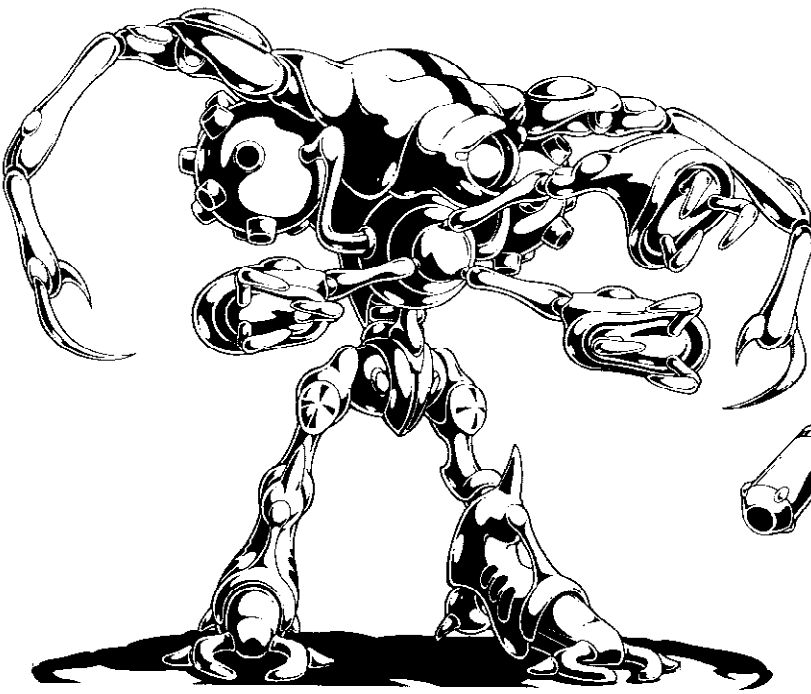
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by Martin Landauer

# Putting Fire into Firepower

*Laser weapons in the original  
TOP SECRET® game*



In 1960, a light source strong enough to melt metal was developed by Dr. Theodore Maiman. This form of light energy, the laser, has now revolutionized many facets of industry, medicine, and communication. Its military applications have been much theorized — and recently realized, tested, and adopted in many fields of warfare. Lasers have shot down Sidewinder missiles and are used in missile guidance systems and telescopic sights. President Reagan's plan for the Strategic Defense Initiative has heightened research into laser-light weaponry; undoubtedly, the Soviet Union has an equal interest in the subject. Documentation on the existence of personal laser weapons is not available at present, but possession of such weapons would certainly be treated confidentially by any government.

For TOP SECRET® game purposes, it is assumed that laser weapons are extremely rare and are found only as prototypes. Nonmilitary lasers are commonly found in major hospitals, universities, and certain factories, where they are kept under tight security. Lasers should never be issued or sold to agents, nor should they be included in adventures for inexperienced agents. Instead, adventures involving lasers should require their recovery, theft, sabotage, or transportation. Lasers should be treated as object targets, not as special equipment, though desperate agents may use them briefly as weapons.

## Lasers: how they work

A laser beam is formed by exciting atoms within a glass tube until they give off radiation in the form of short bursts of light energy called photons. The atoms can be supplied by a variety of substances, including gases, crystals, and color-dyed liquids. In most cases, gas is used in portable laser weapons because of its ability to produce great surges of power.

In a gas laser, a stimulator made of two electrodes excites the atoms with electrical discharges. Once excited, these atoms create millions of photons ricocheting around inside the laser tube and stimulating other atoms in like fashion, until the photons pass through a small hole at one end of the tube in a uniformly straight ray. All this activity takes place in a few nanoseconds. At the firing end of the glass tube is often found an item called a Q-switch, which acts as a shutter to delay the laser burst. The longer the Q-switch remains shut, the more energy is built up within the tube, so that the beam is more powerful when released. There is an 80% chance that a nonmilitary laser has a lock built into its mechanism to prevent unwanted use; all military lasers have locks.

Five different kinds of frames may house a laser apparatus. Only certain sizes of laser tubes can be fitted into each frame, and frame type also affects each laser's Projectile Weapons Value, Weapon Speed, and other characteristics. The five different frame designs and corresponding

**Table 1**  
**Portable Laser Design Statistics**

Laser type	Maximum tube radius	Maximum tube length	PWV	PBR	SR	MR	LR	WS	HWV	Weight
Type 1	½"	12"	80	0	-10	-40	-90	S	13	9 lbs.
Type 2	1"	8"	60	+5	-5	-70	-120	BA	11	8 lbs.
Type 3	1¼"	9"	65	0	-5	-60	-100	S	15	10½ lbs.
Type 4	1"	7"	45	0	-20	-85	-140	S	12	9 lbs.
Type 5	½"	6"	35	0	-30	-110	-180	F	4	2½ lbs.

statistics are listed in Table 1. Of all of the laser housings listed, only type 5 is concealable; it can be held as a pistol and decreases the bearer's Deception by -8 (provided the power pack is concealed or unattached). The weight includes both the frame and the laser apparatus.

#### Power sources

The main bugbear in developing a laser is the question of a power source for exciting the atoms. While fixed lasers can draw their power from wall sockets or larger sources, portable types need to be connected to portable power packs, as the large amount of electricity needed to fire them cannot be stored inside a laser's apparatus. Aspiring laser-users must realize that using a laser weapon involves carrying a power pack the size of a small video recorder, which may encumber the user. This power pack may be housed within a rucksack or attache case.

The capacity of a laser's power pack may not exceed 20 charges. The base weight of the pack is 10 lbs., and the fuel cells generally weigh an additional ½ lb. per charge. It is possible for an advanced laser to carry a 1-lb. magazine containing enough fuel cells for four charges. Power packs may be recharged from batteries, wall sockets, or any other more powerful source of electricity at a rate of 10 minutes per charge. A charge is used up each time a laser is activated, regardless of whether or not the Q-switch is open.

#### Laser applications

One advantage that laser weapons have over conventional weapons is the ability to drill through many kinds of materials. To see if a laser beam passes through a material, first find the normal damage result from Table 2 (which determines laser damage by strength) and Table 3 (which lists the gases which may be used in portable lasers). As some gases generate more energy than others, each gas has a factor listed in Table 3 which is multiplied by the result on Table 2 to produce a final damage result. From this final damage result, subtract the strength of the material the beam is to penetrate, as shown on Table 4. If the damage result is greater than zero, the laser beam has passed through the material. The Administrator must now

**Table 2**  
**Laser Strength/Damage Determination**

Table size (cubic inches)	Damage by delay of blast (in seconds)				
	0	2	4	6	8
1-3	1	3	4	5	6
4-8	2	5	6	7	8
9-14	4	7	8	9	10
15-19	7	9	9	10	10
20-24	9	10	10	11	11
25-30	10	11	11	11	11
31-36	11	11	11	11	12
37-44	11	11	11	12	12

check Table 4 to see whether or not the material ignites. (The Administrator should only estimate the chances of target ignition because of the great number of variables such as beam heat, combustion rates, laser strengths, etc.) The reduced damage result is used if the laser hits another obstacle or person after passing through the material. The strength of the material may be modified as the Administrator sees fit. As a rule, mirrors reflect laser beams if the laser-strength value is less than nine. Smoke obscures laser beams and water scatters them, each reducing a beam's power by one point of damage per 1' of smoke or water. Laser beams travel *ad infinitum* otherwise.

Injuries caused by laser-fire result in concentrated, intense third-degree burns, affecting only a small area of the body. The amount of damage a person receives when hit by a laser is determined by the tube's volume, the time the Q-switch has remained shut before firing, and the type of gas used to give off photons. First, the tube's volume (in cubic inches) is calculated using the formula:  $V=1 \pi r^2$  (the tube's length times pi times the tube's radius squared). Length and radius are expressed in inches. The volume is then cross-referenced on Table 2 with the number of seconds to which the Q-switch is set to delay the laser burst. A Q-switch cannot be shut for more than eight seconds without risking a malfunction (see Table 5).

For example: An agent armed with a stolen, experimental, 26-cubic-inch argon

**Table 3**  
**Laser Gas Factor**

Gas	Multiplication factor
Carbon dioxide	1.0
Dd: YAG*	0.8
Oxygen or argon	0.5
Helium, neon, or krypton	0.33

\* Neodymium:  
yttrium-aluminum garnet

laser fires at an enemy agent through a 1" -thick wooden partition after keeping the Q-switch shut for four seconds. The laser is kept inside a type 3 frame (PWV 65) and, after taking into account the agent's Offense and other modifiers, the hit determination is set at 62%. The Administrator rolls a 39 (a hit) and checks Table 2 to find the laser's strength. Next, he multiplies this result (11) by the 0.5 value argon has on Table 3 to get a total of 6 (rounded to the nearest even number). The wooden partition absorbs 3 points of the laser's strength before the beam hits the target, which in turn receives the remaining 3 points of damage. Laser beams add +20 to rolls on the Bullet Use Against Vehicles Table in the TOP SECRET game's rule book, page 38.

## Damage to the laser

A laser or power pack may be damaged if either device is submerged, dropped from a height of more than 5', overheated, hit by gunfire (the Hit Weapons Table in the TOP SECRET game's rule book, page 25, need not be consulted), has its Q-switch shut off for more than eight seconds, or receives any other kind of rough treatment the Administrator considers harmful. Should any of these events occur percentile dice are rolled on Table 5 to find the result. If the result is "damaged," the device affected is rendered inoperative. There is, however, a 25% chance of repair if there is access to a well-stocked laboratory and a technician with AOK scores of 100+ in electrical engineering

**Table 4**  
**Strength and Inflammability of Materials**

Material	Thickness	Strength	Ignition chance *
Metal	1/2"	4-20	0-10%
Plastic	1"	1-9	0-100%
Glass	1/4"	1/4-4	0-20%
Fabric	1/4"	1/4-8	5-90%
Wood	1"	1/2-7	5-90%
Brick or plaster	1"	3-18	0-75%
Most liquids	2"	0-2	0-100%

\* Depends on nature of substance.

**Table 5**  
**Laser Malfunction**

Event	Chance of malfunction	Malfunction result		
		Damaged	Short-circuit	Explosion
Submerged	10% per second underwater	01-60	61-98	99-00
Overheated *	40% per 50°C (122°F) per minute	01-55	56-80	81-00
Hit by gunfire*	85%	01-70	71-80	81-00
Overdue laser blast **	50% per second after 8 seconds	01-60	61-90	91-00
Dropped	25% per foot dropped over 5'	01-90	91-95	96-00

\* Add 30 to roll when checking damage severity if laser uses oxygen.

\*\* Q-switch kept closed for too long.

and physics. A "short circuit" result means both the laser and power pack are destroyed. The chances of repair remain the same, though separate rolls are made for each piece of equipment. If the result is "explode," then both the power pack and laser weapon are damaged beyond repair, and anyone within 10' of both items suffers 2d10 points of damage. As oxygen is a highly inflammable gas, lasers using it have a +30 modifier when checking for the severity of damage on Table 5.

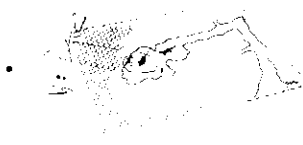
## Conclusion

The Administrator should avoid making lasers too common, portable, or powerful. For instance, a laser weapon found in module TS001 *Operation: Sprechenhalte-stelle* might work (given experienced agents), but one used in TS004 *Operation: Fastpass* or TS005 *Operation: Orient Express* will probably cause problems from the start. It is also wise to remember that except for its use in reading bar codes in stores and other handy applications,

laser technology hasn't grown as quickly as the microchip's has in the past few decades. As a result, when designing a scenario, do not set the stage in a quixotic way. If you are prepared to design and play with realism and good judgment, you can expect to have an innovative and exciting game. Ω

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he boy limped into Erich's battlefield encampment at the end of the longest, hottest day of summer. His long, thin face was white beneath a griming of sweat and dirt, his grey eyes wide and wounded. He could not have seen more than nine years. Even for that

number he was small. The smell of smoke followed him like a ghost from one of the burned farmsteads along the southern bend of the Rill. Erich had torched one of those steads; the invader Vorgund had fired the others.

Kin-reft and wandering, I thought, some farmer's orphaned son. He could as easily have found himself in Vorgund's camp as in ours. I had seen so many of his like in the twenty years I'd fought beside the old lord and the five I'd been with his son Erich. They stagger wherever their legs will carry them. Some stay — the women as camp followers, the men to join the fight in search of vengeance. Others pass through a camp as though it did not exist, bound for some place to rest or to die. These are the ragged phantoms of the day before yesterday when there was no war.

This lad, likely all that was left of some farmer's bid for immortality, was one of those silent ghosts. As he passed me, he stumbled a little over nothing but his own exhaustion. I caught his arm and steadied him.

He did not bother to free himself from my grip, but staggered on as though I had not touched him. His vacant refugee-stare was unbroken.

It is a thing peculiar to war that one battle will fill a warrior's heart with the blazing anthems of glory; another will leave him empty as thunder's echo. This day only hollow echoes dwelt in my heart. Bone tired I was, with the roar of battle still bellowing inside my skull, screaming in my axe-weary arms. I wanted a fire and a full skin of wine, and I did not have it in me to treat with a heart-ruined refugee.

The ghosts in his eyes were cold, frightening reflections of the ones that haunted me. His kin were torn from him. I would have none.

The *skalds* tell that in ancient times there were among the dwarfish race kings and necromancers who trespassed into the realms of immortality. For that transgression the gods decreed that our generations be numbered and our birthright of immortality taken from us. For five generations whose lives spanned a count of years three times that of a human, our race awaited the arrival of those they named *Laestan*, the Last.

I am among the *Laestan*. We watch our fathers die and know that there will be no younglings to provide shelter for their spirits.

I turned away from the stumbling-lad. I had not the heart for being haunted by ghosts stirred to cold life by a boy with empty grey eyes.

Erich had hunted Vorgund's war band through all that long, golden day. It seemed to matter little to him that a village and several outlying farms were razed in the hunt. He wanted Vorgund's head. In pursuit of that head he harried Vorgund's band until he drove them at last to the forests near the northern arm of the Rill. After a battle as

# Between Lightning & Thunder

by Nancy Varian Berberick

*For Doug Clark  
with Garroc's appreciation and mine*

*Illustrations by Stephen E. Fabian*

bloody and ferocious as any I have known, Vorgund, beaten, his back to the dark wood, abandoned the field and fled with his men into the forest.

He styled himself a son of the unthroned Witch-Kings, did Vorgund. So completely did he and his tattered band vanish that some among Erich's army wondered. For my part, I have never considered Vorgund a witch, only a sharp-witted warrior whose tenacity and daring were understandable in one who fights for what he considers his homeland.

My young lord could have dismissed the talk of Witch-Kings, though not gracefully, had that murmuring not been coupled with a whispered mention of the wood imps said to haunt the shadowed forest. Superstitious mutterings can unman a war band as easily as ignominious defeat. For all his youth, Erich knew this well. For speaking of witches and wood imps he had one man flogged, two demoted in rank.

Of those two, one was Oraf, called the Cruel by soldiers whose death-hardened hearts did not often recognize cruelty.

Like a wounded bear, Oraf stalked the smoky dusk. His small dark eyes smoldered with hatred. Those who did not fear the black-haired, barrel-chested warrior did not feel called upon to discuss the matter of his demotion. Who feared him moved quickly aside. One did not move quickly enough. That was when I, newly returned from setting guard watches, knew that the little refugee was with us still.

Crouched before Oraf's fire, the lad looked up when the big warrior's black shadow cut across him. His grey eyes had regained some life, though they were not yet a boy's eyes. They cleared a little at the sight of Oraf. The boy caught up a wineskin from the ground and held it up to the warrior.

It would be easy to say the boy made a wrong move. The truth of the matter is that he could not have made a right one. Oraf snatched the wineskin and struck the boy in the side of the head with almost the same motion.

Though he fell hard, though he must have seen the very stars of night dancing before his eyes, the lad made no cry. He got his legs under him and scrambled to his feet. Rubbing the side of his head with a grubby hand, he edged back into the light of Oraf's fire.

One-eyed Dyfed, my fire mate, shook his head and wondered if the lad were dull-witted.

"Likely not," I said, "and if he's war-stunned, his instincts are still running good. He's found the strongest man in camp to align himself with."

Dyfed took a long pull on his own wineskin and wiped the back of his hand across his mouth. "Why would he do that?"

"Why not? Look at the boy: clearly he's a refugee. Orphaned likely. None stands more alone than an orphan. In his place I would do the same thing. When you run with the biggest wolf, none of the lesser wolves will hurt you."

"But he still has to fear the biggest wolf."

I shrugged. "It's a price the boy is likely willing to pay. And not such a great one at that. We're all wolves to him. Me, I'd rather have one to watch and know the rest of the

pack is kept at bay."

*None stands more alone than an orphan.*

For all my studied indifference, my own words found an empty place in me to echo, and those echoes were dark and painful.

Once I was a *skald*. I abandoned my craft early and trained my voice to battle cries, my hand to the axe's helve. I would rather have listened to the anthems of war than sing the birthless, empty songs of a dwarfish *skald*. I closed my eyes to the *skald leygr*, the storyteller's light. Before I did I crafted the saddest of the sad songs, and like the memory of a hill-flute's mournful sigh, it was with me always.

*Of our treasure we are left,  
King and crofter alike,  
Stoneman, smith, warrior, skald,  
We are beggared.*

*As prayers to vanished gods:  
Our proud histories are echoes,  
Tales told to no one,  
Songs sung over empty cradles.*

The light of Oraf's fire shimmered like bright tears in the little refugee's eyes, gilding the edge of the darkening bruise that stained his face. I turned away, who was too well used to turning away from pain and that which illuminated it.

This was not the first time I had occasion to notice that men are absurdly prodigal of their children. Small claims they are on immortality, but they are claims that the gods will honor nonetheless.

I, who could make no bid for immortality, took the wine from Dyfed and settled down to a determined retreat from those empty echoes, from the boy, and from my own pain.

I had no time to retreat farther than a swallow. Stravar summoned me in Erich's name. "And quickly, if you will, Garroc." The old captain's smile was wry. "He is sorely out of temper."

Dyfed laughed and told Stravar that he brought no fresh news. Erich's temper had been short, dark, and foul since we set up camp. I, pleased to leave behind my contemplations of emptiness, tossed Dyfed the wineskin and followed Stravar through the hot, purpling twilight.

The light of candles and oil lamps burnished Erich's yellow hair to gold, made his face seem sculpted of black shadows. He looked up, raked me with his hawk's eyes, and nodded greeting. He was young then, my lord, having seen only twenty summers. In those days he wondered if he were equal to keeping the lands his father had broken himself to win.

In the matter of age it might be supposed that my own dwarfish kin would not have reckoned me much older than he for all that I had walked through sixty years. Sometimes a young man's understanding bridged the distance between Erich and me; other times he remembered that his lifetime was but a small part of my own.

This night he made me his contemporary. He jerked his chin at the far wall of the tent where the shadows of his advisors ran tall and dark up the canvas. "Old women, those," he growled. "Stay, they say, wait. If they had their

way, this army would wait here by the river until Vorgund's stripling sons are old enough to take up the fight."

"And you, my lord?"

"I will take the fight to Vorgund."

"Into the forest?" I had the feeling that I'd be getting little sleep this night.

My feeling was true. Erich wanted scouts to find Vorgund's camp, and he wanted me to captain them. Dyfed, he chose, my thin and lanky fire mate. A woodcutter's son turned soldier, his hand was fell and deadly in battle, his head cool.

"And take Oraf," he said, "I want to end this talk of old Witch-Kings and wood imps. Let him see Vorgund's band for what they are, men who drink the same ale he does," He smiled sourly. "And who lose it the same way he does. That will stop the witch-talk fast enough. As for the wood imps" — he lifted his shoulders in a careless shrug — "I doubt you'll find those."

I would like to have told him that I did not expect to be able to report one way or another, legend having invested those creatures with invisibility. But, having an interest in retaining both my rank and my skin, I did not think it wise to relate youngling's tales now. I said that I did not anticipate trouble with wood imps.

"Find Vorgund's encampment, Garroc, and bring me back the best map you can of the paths to it. Leave tonight. You know what I need."

I did: the clearest path to the enemy, then the most logical path of attack, and then the least likely. Erich was like his father in this; he would see all around the battleground well before his men set their feet on it.

He had no more orders, I no questions. I left him to collect Oraf and Dyfed.

We were not three who met beyond the light of the army's campfires, but four. Oraf had his little refugee in tow. When I questioned him, he assured me that the lad, having been raised on a farm nearby, would know the paths of this forest better than any of us.

I eyed the little waif sharply. "Is it so, boy?"

The lad nodded.

"What do they call you?"

He shrugged as though it did not matter what he was called. Among men one's name is given only when trust has been earned. The boy's silence in the matter was eloquent. I wondered if Oraf had the boy's name.

I glanced up at the big warrior, and the sullen, hard look of him gave me my answer. Oraf might be the lad's proof against lesser marauders, but he was not anyone the boy trusted. This one would pay the price for protection, but he was giving nothing he was not obliged to give.

And Oraf was amply paid. It is the way of a bully to keep near him those who are more frightened than he so that he may measure his courage against their fear. From the look of the new bruises on the boy's face, I knew that Oraf had been taking the slim measure of his own courage frequently. I'd never liked Oraf before this. That misliking was turning to disgust.

I cocked my head at the boy. "Are you weaponed?"

He shook his head.

I unsheathed my dagger and handed it to him. "Can you use this?"

The boy jerked his wrist so deftly, so swiftly, that I hardly knew he'd moved. My dagger quivered in the dry ground between Dyfed's feet. There is a look in a man's eyes when a blade hits the target he chooses for it. The look cannot be feigned. It graced the boy's fog-colored eyes then.

Oraf hissed an oath, but Dyfed only laughed and retrieved the dagger. He handed the weapon to the boy and cuffed him lightly.

"He can use it, Garroc."

He could indeed. "Boy, tell me where they'd be most likely to camp."

He dropped to his haunches, the moon's light over his shoulder, and smoothed out the hard dirt. The map he sketched showed Erich's encampment, the Rill racing swiftly to our left, and a broad hollow. The river curved around to the north and wound behind the hollow. He stabbed a dirty finger at the hollow and looked up at me.

"How far?"

He did not speak to me, but to Oraf, hulking and dark over his shoulder. "You could get there before moonset," he whispered.

I studied the boy's sketch again. When I looked up, it was to see the lad studying me as closely. I saw my image reflected in those grey eyes as clearly as though I were looking into a still pool. Something else I saw, and what moved in me then frightened me. It is bad enough to live with an old and unhealing wound. To find it freshly bleeding in this boy's soul caught me hard between fear and pity. Like wind moaning around a cairn came, unbidden, my song.

*Vacant the halls of our hearts:*

*Cold and cold the arms*

*Which hold no fair child.*

I wanted to get away from the boy. Or catch him to me and soothe away the grief. The one would have been stupid, the other rebuffed. I scowled. "What, boy?"

He looked away as though he had not heard me.

Oraf's huge hand caught the lad hard in the back of the head and knocked him flat. "Speak when you're told," he snarled. He moved to follow his blow with a kick.

Lean, tall Dyfed moved before I could. He blocked Oraf's kick and stiff-armed him away from the boy. "Leave off," he growled. Anger gleamed in his one blue eye like moonlight on ice. He had not moved for the boy's sake, but from his own well-known scorn for Oraf.

"Both of you leave off," I snapped. Dyfed stepped away. Oraf, his big fists balled, turned on me. He was rigid with fury. My axe came to hand before I could think.

"I'll take you off at the knees, Oraf," I warned coldly. His eyes tracked the silver run of moonlight along the axe's blade. Though he towered over me by half, Oraf had long ago learned that my axe could well defend me. The pace he stepped back was distance enough and admission that he wanted no quarrel with me now.

I pulled the lad to his feet and never minded that he went cool and stiff beneath my hand. "Back to your map, boy."

He dropped again to his heels on the path. Dyfed stood

over him; Oraf did not move. As I leaned on my grounded axe, a cloud slipped in front of the moon. The night deepened and was growing quickly older.

I questioned the boy about the hollow; he answered silently, only speaking when a gesture would not do. Still he satisfied me that he knew the forest. According to him, there was no other place but the hollow where Vorgund could rest his war band. The woods were too thick here and thicker beyond the river.

"Well enough," I said at last. I had formed a simple plan of movement. As Erich had, I, too, learned warfare from the old lord who had no patience for any but the most direct and unembroidered schemes.

"Dyfed, you angle north and east." I barely paused before I went on, and in that moment I took my first step toward a decision I could not then have imagined. "Take Oraf. The boy and I will move north and west. If you find the hollow empty, cross it and meet us at the river. If you find it occupied, skirt it like ghosts and mark well every rock and path. Join us when you see us."

Dyfed nodded. His thin mouth was a hard, grim line. We were going now in search of enemies. "The gods' grace, Garroc," he said.

I told him not to give away what he might need himself, and watched him and big Oraf slip beneath the wood's dark eaves. Oraf would have taken the rear had Dyfed not gestured him forward. If Dyfed did not like all that black anger at his back, I could not blame him.

The little refugee looked suddenly lost, abandoned again. Surely, I thought in amazement, he cannot count it any but a grace that he can walk for a while without Oraf's hard fist hovering like a threatening storm over his head!

His grey eyes widened as though they would follow Oraf until he'd vanished into the forest's gloom. Indeed, had I released the lad, he would have loped after Oraf like a pup after his master.

He was alone with one of the lesser wolves. I saw by his skittish movements that he did not know what this lesser wolf might do. He was prepared to bolt. With a gentleness that surprised me, I took the lad's shoulder and turned him west. "Lead or follow, boy?"

Without a word he moved out in front. If I'd had any doubt that the boy knew the forest, it vanished then. No one moves in complete silence through the wood. Still that lad passed over the age's dead leaves and brought only the faintest whisper of protest. None could have discerned the boy's footfalls over the shrill and scream of the night insects. Clearly, a skilled hunter had taught the lad his woodcraft.

Though I could not see it for the screening brush and trees, I heard the Rill running on my left for all our journey. The wind, a faint sigh of air, moved from the south. I knew we were traveling north when I felt its hot breath on my neck.

The boy led me true, finding thin deer trails, skirting the boggy ground near the unseen river's banks whenever he could. I set in memory all his turns and the look of each game trail we followed. He was tracking to the hollow because he knew Oraf would be there.

From time to time he would stop, lifting his head as a

hound will when scenting the way. Never once did he look back at me. It was as though he did not care that I followed. During one of those pauses he turned, and the moon's clear light fell across his face. Oraf's bruises stained his pale skin like dark shadows.

Oraf had a dog once, a yellow mongrel bitch. Slat-sided, with one blue eye and one brown, that ragged-tailed, crooked-eared beast worshiped a deity, and the god's name was Oraf. When he thought to, Oraf fed the bitch from the scraps of his meals. He did not bother to gift her with a name. In the dark watches of an icy winter night the bitch gave birth to a litter of pups. After two nights their whimpering outside the barracks annoyed Oraf. He drowned, them, one by one, in the Rill. When the bitch, frantic to save her young, put herself between him and the remaining pups, her deity, Oraf, called the Cruel, cut her throat and left her to die on the river's banks.

I thought of that mongrel bitch then, and shivered in the hot night. I was haunted by the memory of the hill-flute and by the boy's pain.

*As smoke on the wind:  
Our bold histories fade,  
Graces conferred upon no one,  
Songs whispered over empty cradles.*

*Fading the light of our souls:  
Empty and empty the eyes  
Which see no youngling's smile.*

Still certain that I cherished my emptiness, for I had long ago judged it better than being filled with pain, I pretended that I did not hear or remember my song. I followed the lad until the trees began to thin, until the game trails he tracked took an abrupt turn to the east. All unlooked-for we stood in a narrow clearing.

Only several strides wide, the clear ground ran in a large circle to the north and south and was bordered by tall, thick-boled oaks. Rock oaks, my people call these giants. Seen in a flood of moonlight such as washed this clearing, their uneven grey bark gives them the seeming of being hewn from stone. Now the moon slanted her thin light directly across their rough trunks. They looked like a stockade, those ancient trees. Or a barricade. The boy pointed silently to the oaks.

I had the sudden thought that the trees had not grown up in that perfect circle by nature's whim. We failing Firstborn are a superstitious race. While we may smile at firelight tales of wood imps, we scent omens on the wind and read fates in the play of starlight on a boulder's craggy shoulders. I thought of Witch-Kings and my blood chilled. Witch-kings who set no guard but ward themselves with magic.

"The hollow," I whispered, my throat suddenly tight and dry, "beyond those oaks?"

He nodded once, and I cursed my absurd fears low under my breath. I was becoming as foolish as Oraf. The Witch-Kings had long been run to ground. Years before, Erich's father and his kind had burned the last of those magic-users. The smoke of that great burning had hung stinking in the air for weeks. Though canny Vorgund might style himself a son of those long dead kings, he was

not.

Yet I could not imagine that he would camp, even in this hidden and secure place, without posting guards outside this tree-formed stockade. "There is no war band here," I said flatly.

The boy dodged a little, then held deer-still waiting for my anger to fall upon him, a blow or a kick. I took him by the shoulder, not to strike, though I was angry. The anger was partly for my own credulous acceptance of Vorgund's fear-screen, partly because the boy was so calmly certain that I would pay him for his error in Oraf's coin or worse.

"Boy, I am not going to hit you."

He didn't believe me, but strained back from me, eyes narrow, face as stiff as a dead man's. Once more I saw fear in his eyes. Once more I wanted to hold him, to shelter him from his grief and terror. I did not, though I should have. Aye, I should have. Instead, turning aside yet again from a pain that too closely mirrored my own, I released him.

"Be easy, lad," I said gruffly, "you made a good guess. But good guesses do not always bring the right answers."

He swallowed, a hard gulp, and raised his head. That little chin had a stubborn set to it, the first I'd seen all night. Almost I applauded his hard-jawed defiance.

"They have to be there," he said, his voice so low I barely heard his words. "There is no place else for them to be."

I shook my head. "There are no guards."

I saw him consider it. For that moment his expression was free of fear. I had been granted a look at something that might never be seen again: the boy's guard was wholly down. Beneath his grime and bruises he was a likely looking lad.

Having thought, his wariness returned. He gave me a quick, gauging look then darted through the moon's clear light to the oaks. So close were those trees that he had to lean, either hand on a trunk, to peer into the hollow. He looked for a long time, the moon's sharp light argent across his shoulders, white in his black hair. He gestured me forward.

The hollow was deep and very broad, a giant's chalice. On all sides it sloped steeply down for nearly fifteen yards. Its floor leveled in a grassy sward. The moon's light, clear as water here on the hollow's lip, was strangely milky in the green bowl. Behind me I heard the chirrup of insects. From the hollow I heard nothing.

Figures I made out, still and silent. Vorgund's standard, the crowned eagle rampant, fluttered lazily in the warm southern breeze. Other than that pennon, nothing moved. Every man of them seemed to be sleeping. Had Vorgund grown so careless in this secret place that he set no watch? I steadfastly refused to consider Witch-Kings.

Beside me, though, the boy trembled beneath the cold breath of fear. His small hand touched mine on my axe's helve. Despite the heat of the night, his fingers were like ice. "The light," he whispered, "something is wrong with the light!"

"The moon's angle," I muttered, "and her light has to fall through leafed branches."

The harsh *chak! chak!* of a golden brown wheatear chopped through the night: Dyfed's signal. I returned the

sign, and he, a lean, dark phantom, tow-hair gilded by clear moonlight, slipped from behind a broad oak to the west. Oraf, bear large, followed.

Here is one, I thought bitterly, who will happily believe in Witch-Kings. From where I stood I saw the gleaming whites of the big warrior's eyes. Though he was a long moment about it, the boy moved to Oraf's side.

Dyfed nudged me. "Is Vorgund such a witling that he posts no guard?"

I did not think so; I have never thought Vorgund in want of wits.

"Witch," Oraf whispered. Almost the word was a sigh.

"It's none of that," I growled.

"What, then?" the big man challenged. His right hand was full of his sword, his broad face sheened with sweat.

"An odd moon's light and a warlord too secure in his hiding."

Oraf said nothing; Dyfed grunted. "A ghost could drift in there and find the right of it." His sky-colored eye glittered sharply. "Or a ghost-footed scout."

"Aye, though you'll not go alone."

He shook his head. "Yes, alone. None moves quieter in the wood than I do. You know it, Garroc. Wait up here for me; I'll not be long about it." He saw my doubt and quirked a good-humored smile. "I've a fine regard for my own skin, friend dwarf, never fear."

He did not boast of his skill who was known for it. Too, I knew that my thought was his own: Erich would be well pleased if we brought back not only knowledge of Vorgund's hiding place but the count and condition of his warriors. I let him go.

The moon's strange light veiled Dyfed the moment he stepped beyond the sentinel oaks. We saw him vaguely, like a *fok weard*, a fog ghost, drifting down the side of the hollow.

Beside me Oraf whispered an oath to a god I did not know. The little lad whimpered, and I looked around. Oraf gripped his shoulder hard enough for me to see the whitening of his knuckles in the moon's light. I did not speak, but prised the man's digging fingers from the boy's flesh. Oraf snarled like a wolf whose prey has been snatched from its jaws. I didn't care, but turned back to the hollow, searching the moon-fog for Dyfed.

Ghost-footed, he'd said, and ghost-footed he was. Through the thick, covering fog I saw him pause to loose his sword. He cocked his head to listen, moved to see everything the fog did not shroud. Almost I could hear him thinking: that is the wind and not one of Vorgund's men creeping through the thinly ranked saplings; that is a boulder, not a sentry. Satisfied, he went on.

I was not satisfied: something was not right. It took me a moment to realize that while the trees striped the ground with their thin shadows and boulders crouched in dark pools, Dyfed moved shadowless through the strange, thick light.

With half the distance to the floor of the bowl yet to be covered, he vanished.

A shadow's hiding him, I thought. I waited for as long as I could hold my breath, straining to see through the milky moon-fog. Dyfed did not reappear.

I sounded the wheatear's call once, then again. My one-

eyed friend did not respond. I took the risk and called low for him. The southern breeze, as though listening for his reply, fell still. Then I heard his voice, high and oddly bright.

"Garroc! Come down! The hollow is empty!"

Relief ran through me, followed by a sudden crawling fear. Either my eyes lied, or Dyfed did. The hollow was no more empty now than it had been before Dyfed stepped into the moon-fog. Men still lay prone upon the ground. Though the breeze had fallen dead on the lip of the hollow, down below Vorgund's standard still moved sleepily. Beside me Oraf voiced another oath.

The rustle of an approach from below was loud in the hot, still night, threaded through with the bright, silver song of crickets and sounding like panthers in the brush. The skin on the back of my neck prickled. I thought of Witch-Kings. I should have been thinking of wood imps.

"Garroc, there's no need to hang back now." Dyfed's was the voice of a man who has found bounty where he expected to find enemies. Though he must have stood only a reach away, I could not see him clearly for the mist.

Dyfed reached out of the moon-fog, and they were no fleshed fingers which pierced that grey veil, but the death-pared bones of a skeleton. Mist clung to those bones, and the moon's pale light gleamed along the moisture like an evil silver chasing.

When that fell hand touched Orafs wrist, the big warrior's scream, high and piercing, tore the dark fabric of the night, lightning rending black storm clouds.

He moved swiftly, did Oraf the Cruel. He jerked hard and freed himself from that hideous grip. The boy, instincts afire, grasped Orafs arm with both hands and clung. Did Oraf see the boy as an obstacle to flight or as something to be cast between him and Death's hand? I don't know; likely, he did not know either. He howled again and threw the boy off.

Shaking as though his very bones rattled with terror, his eyes huge and dark, the boy reached for Oraf again. The big man whipped around and kicked the lad hard in the stomach. I felt the pain of that kick in my own belly. And, stunned, I felt the abandoned child's aching, cold emptiness as though it were my own heart despairing.

Fury overrode sense. I spun on Oraf when I should have leaped for the boy. My axe, a flash of steel and silver in the night, caught Oraf full in the side. His ribs splintered beneath the blade. A scarlet cowl of blood dimmed the axe's flash.

The boy's scream smothered Oraf's, and I, my axe bloody, my heart roaring like thunder, spun again to see that skeletal hand, like some huge, unclean spider, gripping the lad's shoulder and pulling, pulling.

I struck at that bony wrist — Dyfed's! My blade turned on it as though it were iron. Fire lanced through my arms, my wrists ached with the pain of that blow. I struck again, and my axe fell from nerveless hands. The thing that had been Dyfed dragged the boy to the very lip of the hollow.

"No!" I roared. The lad was rigid with terror and incapable of either scream or whimper.

I grabbed the boy's hands in my own two and hauled. I might as well have pitted myself against Death's own grip. Dyfed's strength was not mortal. Fury and horror tore

through me: I was losing the boy!

Lights, globes of fire the size of my fist, red, blue, and green, swirled before my eyes. Skimming the night between me and the boy, they spun and rounded as though in some patterned dance. I saw his face, white and set, through their rainbow play. A voice, light and soft, whispered ghost-words in my ear. The words were matched by an image, shadowy as a dream half-remembered: something that was not Dyfed reached for the boy.

*I will call him back, release his hands.*

When I did not surrender my grip, blue flame skittered between our bridge of hands. The lick and sear of lightning raced through my bones and muscles. Instinct freed the lad's hands where will would not. Before I could raise my burned hands to my mouth the pain cooled and vanished as though it had not been.

The blue fire-sphere separated from its companions, moved through the air with effortless grace, and tumbled along the length of the skeletal arm until it lay up against the moon-fog.

*Free the child, the light's voice murmured. In my mind, behind my real sight, a hand edged with blue fire lifted in command. You have violated the Sacred Hollow and you are ours. Within the Hollow there is death-life, outside it you are bones and dust. But the boy makes no choice to enter. Free him! Ta'alyn Wood Imp, speaks.*

Wood imps! Not invisible, as legend claimed, but transparent as flame. Cold sweat traced icy paths down the ridges of my ribs.

Dyfed's bone-fingered hand fell away. Rising like a wolf's howl, his desolate cry spun up to that pitiless lady, the moon. For a breathless moment I saw one-eyed Dyfed as no more than a cold moon-mist. Then that, too, was gone, and a sleeping figure lay at the edge of Vorgund's encampment where none had been before.

Half in the moon-fog, the boy did not move.

Ta'alyn's disembodied voice softened. *You are free, young human.*

The boy's shoulders slumped, tears the color of spider's webs traced glittering paths along his cheeks. Ta'alyn moved closer to the lad.

When the boy did not move, Ta'alyn's light wavered and dimmed as though the wood imp sighed with pity. *Here is not your place, young human. See the lands where you belong.*

As the boy must have, I saw the sun, full and warm, lying across golden fields; moonlight graced a river with an argent filigree. A boy ran across the field to chase the wind; in a hunter's camp beside the river he slept in the arms of a tall, grey-eyed man. I knew, without understanding how I came by this knowledge, that the grey-eyed man was the boy's father.

*Go back now. To the blood-warmed.*

Incredibly, the boy shook his head. It was the heartsore gesture of one who abandons the field of battle. Ta'alyn drifted between the boy and me. Plainly, he had not considered that a "blood-warmed" would ever seek other than life.

*There is only death-life below, young human. Only continuing, continuing, never ending. It is the fate decreed for the violators of*

the Sacred Hollow.

It might be that blue-lighted Ta'alyn could read the boy's heart. Surely, he spoke to me before the boy ever made another gesture. *Heart-reft this young one is. Father-killer he names you, Firstborn.* Ta'alyn flared, bright blue. Black shadows scurried across me and death-still Oraf.

Father killer! The epithet drew blood from an old and familiar wound: heart's blood. I saw little difference, then, between the fatherless and the childless. The cold, hollow pain was the same, and it cast me, shivering and bereaved, into dark, dark places filled with lightless hearths and broken circles.

That image was not created by Ta'alyn. I'd lived with it too long not to know it for my own. From it had come the saddest of the sad songs.

*As the frost kissed mountain rose:*

*Our brave histories wither,*

*Love given to no one,*

*Songs wept over empty cradles.*

And I'd lived with it long enough to know that I dared not stay in that empty place. I dragged myself, hurt and shaking, back to the forest and the moonlight.

Ta'alyn had addressed me as Firstborn. As the gods' failing but still loved first child I answered. "I did not kill the boy's father. I killed this one." I spat upon Oraf's corpse. "He earned the axe."

*So the gods set you to judge, did they?*

I might have been damned for my arrogance; I did not think of that then. "I do not ask the gods' permission each time I lift my axe."

Again Ta'alyn flared, the blue deepened. *Ah, then they ask you to kill for them when they see the need?*

A handspan from me the boy sobbed and bowed his head.

Behind my sight were black, yawning pits, cracked vessels, and things once living, now dead. To my left and right, the green and red globes, Ta'alyn's companions, dimmed their lights and left the clearing in pity or disgust.

*You must call him, Firstborn, or I shall. And if I do, he will live, not as a blood-warmed, but as my kind.*

I call him? How could I, who so many times before should have called him to me and did not? Where would I find the strength? I pitied him, but I could not, even now, look too deeply into those desolate grey eyes for fear of seeing my own emptiness.

Oraf's bruises showed purple and black along his thin arms, on his white face. Ta'alyn drifted closer to the boy.

I did not move with thought, but with the same instinct that would impel me to pull a child from the path of a runaway horse. Still, my attempt was a weak one. "Boy," I whispered, "I did not kill your father."

He did not look up, but back behind him to the moon-fog as though it was enough that someone there wanted him. Blue Ta'alyn hung between the boy and me.

"Who was your father, boy? Is he dead? Is he war-killed?"

That did something to his stony silence. A whimper leaked through it like water past a cracking dam.

"War killed? By Erich's men, or Vorgund's?"

Ta'alyn paled again, I saw the boy clearly now. "Boy, look at me."

He did, his eyes flinching, tear-drowned. "You killed him," he whispered.

I did not understand, and would not had Ta'alyn not given me the picture of the boy's feeling. It was I the boy saw in his head: a yellow-haired, thick-bearded dwarf leaning on a deadly, blood-sheathed war axe. Behind me stood Oraf, Dyfed, hawk-eyed Erich, and countless other nameless, weaponed soldiers. He saw a farmstead burning, his tall, grey-eyed father hacked and bleeding in the dust.

I heard cold whispers from my own empty, aching places: the ghosts of dead cradle-songs. "No, lad," I groaned, shivering in the icy wind of our bereavement, "don't look at that again."

But, seeing it, the boy could not turn away. The wood imp blazed and then paled again. He pitied me, I think, as much as he did the boy.

"Let it go, boy!" I dropped my next words like bitter stones into the boy's silence. "Your father is dead. And . . . I grieve with you."

He lifted his head, saw Ta'alyn, and smiled a little. He was choosing.

Oh youngling, I thought, what would be better? Eternity among the wood imps or your life's span among men? And who had given the lad any reason to choose for life? None. Not Oraf, not I. My heart felt like hard stone against my ribs. And well it might: I had spent most of my life making certain that, soon or late, it would become stone.

In that moment the boy seemed as transparent as Ta'alyn drifting between us. He appeared emptied of the hard, real life of men, of his kind, ready to be filled for a god's eternity with the light of the wood imp. If I turned aside now, he would choose Ta'alyn. And if I let him do



that, no amount of wishing would make my own heart anything but stone upon which were graven the words I had made.

*Of our fading kind we stand last,  
King and crofter alike,  
Stoneman, smith, warrior, skald.  
We are childless.*

"Youngling!" My cry sounded to me as desolate as fated Dyfed's. And I do not know yet for whom I pleaded, the boy or myself.

He stiffened, then looked up at me slowly.

I went down on my heels, held my hands out to him, my arms wide and empty as any prospect I had of siring a son. "Youngling, come to me."

He hung there for a long moment. I offered him no answer, nothing but the chance to live with loss and pain. It is not much to choose for. I felt like one who offers a poor and shabby gift.

As though he did not agree, Ta'alyn's light filled the clearing.

The boy shuddered. Staggering like one drunk, he stepped and then stepped again. I dared not move, but watched him stepping and stepping, away from eternity.

"Youngling," I whispered.

He turned those grey eyes on me, and they shone like beacons.

"Garroc?"

He'd never spoken my name before now. I trembled to hear it echoing in the empty halls of my heart. "Aye, youngling. Come to me now."

He staggered a little, reaching for me the way a blind man reaches for a wall. His hands clutched my arms and he sobbed once. I felt the ache in him, the sharp-fanged gnawing pain of his loneliness. Kin-reft, I thought, and who should know better about that reaving than one whose race, twilight now and failing, will not increase?

Ta'alyn's light, blue and cool, burst like a fireball over us then vanished. Flash blind, the boy flung his arms around my neck and finally wept, a raging storm whose violence might have shaken his soul from his body had I not held him.

And, holding him, my own stone heart at last softened.

I would not turn aside again. My arms, too long empty of a child's warmth, were full. The hollow places inside me knew light and the grace of a son.

He would never forget his tall, grey-eyed father. But he burrowed his face into my shoulder and tangled a small hand in my beard as though to tell me that, if I wished to, I might stand in his father's stead.

I wished to and the boy knew it. He felt my own weeping.

When I could speak again, I asked him his name.

"Hinthan," he whispered, wiping a hand that was yet dirty across his face. "It means 'hunter.' I am named for my — for my father."

I gently erased the dirty trails of his tears with both thumbs and kissed him, who had never kissed a son before now. Then I lifted the boy, snatched up between a wood imp's lightning and war's thunder, and carried him back to Erich's camp.

The lord received the word of Oraf's death and Dyfed's in stony silence. When he did speak, it was not to regret the loss of two men. Erich was not one to dwell upon that which he could not change. He nodded to the boy asleep on my shoulder. "What of him?"

"Like me," I said simply, "he survived."

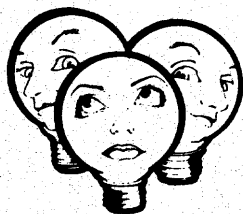
Erich dismissed me with a flicker of his sharp blue eyes. I knew him well enough to know that fire burned behind those cold eyes. He had been cheated of Vorgund's head, a prize for which he had waged battles across half his holding to win.

I took the dismissal gratefully.

That night the boy Hinthan slept curled against me, his head on my shoulder, his small hand tangled again in my beard. As I listened to him breathe, I came to understand that I had unmade a shadow and the saddest of the sad songs.

It remained to be discovered whether I might ever craft a new song. Then I did not think I would. Still, in the most fleeting of my dreams, dim yet and hesitant as though it were not certain of its welcome, shone the *skald leygr*, the storyteller's light. One day, it promised, one day there will be another song.

Ω



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# DAILY PLANET™ GAMING SUPPLEMENT

Fall Edition

October 4th, 1988

Number 15

## UPDATED SUPERSPEED RULES DEBUT IN NEW FLASH™ ADVENTURE: CITY OF FEAR

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The Player declares that s/he is using Superspeed and makes an Action Check using the APs of Superspeed as the AV/EV and as the OV/RV (this is similar to the roll that is made when Pushing an Automatic Action). The RAPs received on the Superspeed Check are equal to the number of Standard Actions that the Character may perform in that phase. Actions cannot be saved and used on later phases.

If there are no positive RAPs, something happened to preclude the Character from performing multiple actions that phase (GM's discretion). A Character may always make the usual single Standard Action for any given phase, even if the Result Table yielded an 'N.' Hero Points may be used to increase the AV/EV when making a Superspeed roll.

This new rule is in addition to the effects of Superspeed already listed in *Powers and Skills*. As a side effect of the *Crisis On Infinite Earths™*, Characters with Superspeed may no longer travel through time unless they also have the Time Travel Power.

### AMANDA WALLER™

Amanda Waller alias "The Wall"™

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Race: Human

#### Background:

Amanda Blake was born in the Cabrini-Green housing projects in Chicago, and later married Joseph Waller™ at age 18. When her husband and two oldest children were killed in street violence, Amanda swore that she would not allow the streets to claim any more of her family.

Waller sent her remaining children through college and then went to school herself. Upon graduating, she helped an idealistic Congressional candidate to get elected and then moved to Washington as part of his staff. While researching a crime control bill, Waller discovered old records of the World War II-era Suicide Squad. She then used her influence to convince the President to authorize a new Squad comprised of ruthless, expendable agents.

Since then, Waller has acted as Operations Supervisor of Task Force X. In addition to overseeing all of the new Suicide Squad's missions, she is also the "queen" of Checkmate.

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Every role-playing game focuses on strategic gamesmanship, regardless of its

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Chemical Weaponry only to Soldiers; Heavy Arms only to Marines and Soldiers; Scouting/Recon only to Marines; etc. Some skills, like Light Arms and Medical, are open to all classes.

Character creation assigns numerical values to specific attributes, as is common with most role-playing games. In *Star Command*, these attributes are Strength, Speed, Accuracy, Courage, Willpower, Esper, and Intelligence. The range of points is from 30 to 70 in each attribute, generated randomly by the computer. The player decides when the total point assign-

ment is to his liking for a specific character. Character training starts at the Academy. Depending upon how well each character completes his studies, his rank is increased, which leads to better pay (from 1,500 credits for a Private to 45,000 credits for a Grand Admiral), which leads to a greater total of earned team credits, which can be used to buy better ships and equipment for the missions.

Star Command assigns all missions. The successful completion of an assignment not only earns credits but also allows additional training for personnel. On their way to each mission, characters can explore planets in search of valuable elements, which can be stored in the ship's cargo hold for sale upon return to Starbase. If an insect warrior ship or pirates are met and defeated, additional credits can be earned in excess of the mission credits. Players can also board intact enemy ships and fight their foes man-to-man. This has the advantage of allowing a player to commandeer the enemy ship and tow it back as salvage for even more credits (and promotions in rank).

We have played *Star Command* steadily for nearly a month and have neither run out of missions nor become bored. Most of our personnel began their lives as Corporals, with one lucky character going through Officer's School and starting as a Sergeant. Most of our characters are now at least Second Lieutenants, with one a Major and another a Brigadier. We have also performed three ship upgrades, starting with the Hornet-class Scoutship and moving up to a Fire-Drake-class Corvette. Upgrading your ship increases your vessels armor, power, defense bonuses, maximum movement per round, fuel, and the number of dropships carried (the small survey craft flown from your starship to a planet's surface for scientific or assigned investigations).

Initially, all combat will be ship vs. ship, so make certain your craft is equipped with Hypervelocity Rockets in all positions, even to the extent of not purchasing armor or weapons for the crew. When you finally start earning money, be certain that the minimum armor you buy for each crew member is the Infantry Exo Armor. Even with puny hand weapons or light weaponry, the armor could save a lot of lives before a mission is completed.

An excellent starting crew consists of two Pilots, three Marines, two Soldiers, and an Esper. When selecting their skills at the start of your game, allocate points to Light Arms skills. Don't worry about Heavy Weaponry and Heavy Arms skills until you can afford to buy more sophisticated weapons. Be certain that one of your Marines trains in Scouting/Recon, as this talent will be used throughout the entire game. Another Soldier or Marine experienced in Explosives and a Marine or Soldier experienced in Chemical Weapons will also be helpful. These weapons are usually inexpensive (compared to other weaponry)

*Star Command:  
Pirate Troopers are  
bad news early in the  
game.*



and are most effective in hand-to-hand combat situations.

One of the most economical ships in the game is the Hornet class, equipped with at least one Hypervelocity weapon. This will leave your crew with enough money to purchase some good shields and defensive armor for the ship. Lastly, the Castro Gunner skill is critical to success; make certain that the Copilot and the Esper characters possess at least Level 2 skill in this area to make better use of your ship's weaponry and survive the early missions.

Star Command requires a CGA or EGA card for play. A variety of screens offer menus for many activities, such as ship refueling, selling and buying equipment, star navigation, starship and personal combat, and the investigation of planets and individual locations (such as the bar). These screens are handled with little complication. The only boring aspect of the game is an unchanging animated sequence used each time you fly a dropship to a planet for an assignment or for scouting activities. However, the final mission (to uncover the insectoid aliens' plans for invasion) is one that'll leave you gasping for air as you duel with their main battleships.

#### Questron II

\*\*\*\*

IBM micros/compatibles version \$44.95

Here is one remedy for those of you who own IBM microcomputers or compatibles and complain that IBM game selections are limited in number. Many IBM game conversions are simply ports from a graphically rich operating system to either monochrome or CGA video-display mode on the IBM (which is not a good choice for rich graphics). Thank heavens for Westwood Associates, a company that has been writing some of SSI's recent game conversions for the IBM system. Westwood Associates has managed to convert *Questron II* and, at the same time, enable players to run the game in either EGA or VGA graphics modes. When playing one of these converted games, the player is asked (after the main menu selection) which graphics environment he wishes to use. With the EGA/VGA selection, the rich graphics provided rival that of any computer system (except perhaps those of the Commodore Amiga or Atari ST computers). If other vendors would find companies to convert their games as well as Westwood Associates has done for SSI, the current popularity of IBM gaming would encourage a flood of new games for PC users!

*Questron II* continues the adventure from *Questron* and requires that you keep the Evil Book of Magic from being created. The dungeons are presented in three-dimensional form, and automapping ensures that you will have a pretty good idea of where you are located within their dank confines. If you confront a creature, you'll see it on-screen in full color. In our opinion, the Westwood Associates conver-



*The Bard's Tale III:*  
Rainbow dragons are  
not pleasant.



*The Bard's Tale III:*  
Automapping is  
extremely handy in  
dungeons.

sion of *Questron II* should become a member of any IBM gamer's library!

#### Electronic Arts

1820 Gateway Drive  
San Mateo CA 94404  
(415) 571-7171

#### *The Bard's Tale III: Thief of Fate* \*\*\*

Commodore 64/128 version \$39.95  
Highly touted and long awaited, *The Bard's Tale III* fantasy role-playing game from Interplay Productions is now available. This third scenario finds that village of mystery, Skara Brae, left in ruins by the crazed machinations of the Mad God Targan. Do you remember Garth's Equipment Shop? Well, it's gone, as well as some other locales that were so important in *The Bard's Tale I* and *II*.

The mission in this third scenario is to halt this evildoer's revenge on the Six Cities of the plains. The Review Board is still in its original location, and some parts of the city are still familiar. It helps to maintain a sharp eye for a building located extremely close to the now-charcoal entrance of Skara Brae. This particular edifice contains certain important items that can help all members of your adven-

turing party.

This fantasy role-playing game has more than 84 dungeon levels and seven dimensions. The mission is no easy task for even the most experienced questers. There are (thankfully) some new and powerful spells with which to counter over 500 creatures. Of even better news is the fact that now you can save your game in progress at any time (a much-needed improvement). Automapping has also been added, which reveals exactly where the party is in any dungeon as well as the party's location in a city. This feature is activated with a press of the ? key. The walls and doors of underground corridors and tunnels are revealed on-screen. You can also use your computer's cursor keys to move the map in any direction to check the known areas.

There are now 13 character classes, including the new Geomancer and Chronomancer types. A Geomancer is basically a fighter who now prefers a life of magical prowess. In order to gain this ability, however, some special talents are lost, such as multiple attacks and, if the character was a Bard, the Bard's song skills. A Monk loses his armor-class bonuses and multiple-hit capability, while a Hunter loses his critical-hit ability. Never-

*Power at Sea:*  
The view from the  
bridge.



theless, such characters can still use their armor and weapons (including any magical ones) as Geomancers. A Chronomancer becomes a highly trained and potent travel agent for the party, with the power to cast dimensional teleportation spells. However, he sacrifices all other spells he knew before changing to this class. A character cannot become a Chronomancer until he has learned all of the spells of three mage classes. Note: This game cannot be won without a Chronomancer!

You initiate your quest from the Refugee Camp, where you can build a party from scratch or by transferring characters from *The Bard's Tale I* or *II*, *Ultima III* or *IV*, or *Wizardry I*, *II*, or *III* adventure-game systems. Thankfully, we had some potent folk from our copy of *The Bard's Tale I* and brought them into play with great effect. Not once were we defeated in battle in over 48 solid hours of play! (This did become somewhat boring, however.)

What *did* defeat us, and in the end caused us to give *The Bard's Tale III* a less than perfect score, are the continuous battle conditions in the game. This was a purely personal preference based on our belief that a fantasy game should possess much more than combat scenarios to create an effective environment for gaming. There is no other recourse in *The Bard's Tale III* but to engage in one of the following acts:

*Attack Foes* (those within 10' of the group);

*Defend, Party Attack* (take on one of your own adventurers, in case he has become a rotten apple in the group),

*Cast a Spell* (which requires a four-letter spell code);

*Use an Item* (such as missiles or a magical Item like the Dayblade);

*Bard Song* (allowing you to play one of eight such songs, such as the new Rhyme of Duotime), and

*Hide in Shadow* (used in the dark recesses of city streets or at night)

Every selection is based on an action

resulting from being attacked. There is no chance to talk your foes out of attacking or bribe them to leave you alone. Additionally, it seems as though every time you turn around in the dungeons, some foul creature is at your heels. Pity the poor characters that start this game with little or no experience at all! Our 13th- and 14th-level warriors and magic-users were constantly besieged by creatures, especially in subterranean locales. Just when you're trying to figure out an important trap, determine where a spinner has propelled you on the map, or produce light in perpetual darkness, the nasties pounce on you. After more than 40 hours of play, *The Bard's Tale III* wasn't fun anymore! No matter how hard we worked on puzzle solving and treasure hunting (the meatier aspects of the game), along came the rotters to spoil the fun.

Constant destruction and killing are not what fantasy role-playing games should perpetuate. Certainly combat is crucial, but your table-top adventures include all sorts of activities, such as learning ways to avoid certain combat, to communicate with various races, to proceed down dungeon corridors as a team while searching for treasure, and to maintain one's own alignment. Other computer-based fantasy role-playing games also offer a variety of options, such as *Ultima V* (described in *DRAGON*® issue #137). So, despite the fact that *The Bard's Tale III* has an updated plot and more spells and character classes, and even with material rewards offered as payment for slaughter, the fighting leaves players tired of the entire event.

If you particularly enjoy combative environments, then *The Bard's Tale III* is for you. If not, seek a world more reflective of true fantasy role-playing games — one where brawn and brain are required for success. Perhaps we are too familiar with this game series, having played the ongoing *Bard's Tale* series for months. (Does familiarity breed contempt?)

#### **Accolade, Inc.**

550 South Winchester; Suite 200  
San Jose CA 95128  
(408) 296-8400

#### **Power At Sea**

\*\*\*

Commodore 64/128 version \$29.95

Accolade is coming on strong! This game company was once relatively unknown, offering few classy products and next to nothing in the way of promotional campaigns. It has certainly turned its future about with recent releases. *Power At Sea* is a simulation of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, in which the Japanese make their move to capture the Pacific during World War II. In C64/128 format, the graphics and sound enhance play. Commanding a battleship, an aircraft carrier, and a troop ship, you not only launch naval gun barrages against enemy cave emplacements but also direct assault forces to capture beachheads in enemy-held territory. The only fault with the game lies in its repetitiveness; after you've shelled five, or more islands, the scenes get tiresome. In addition, there is really no way to control the landings with your own strategies. Other than that, Accolade continues to impress us with its simulation software.

#### **Activision, Inc.**

3885 Bohannon Drive  
Menlo Park CA 94025  
(415) 329-0800

#### **Shanghai**

\*\*\*\*\*

Commodore Amiga version \$39.95

As a computerized version of mah-longg, *Shanghai* is a success. This version is so good that several friends and neighbors, after seeing the game in play on our computers, rushed out to purchase it for themselves. As a result, this evaluation encapsulates the feelings of numerous other players, some of whom felt that it was the finest strategy game they'd ever played. It requires a great deal of thought, superb memory, and concentration. After you win a game, the tiles reveal the three-dimensional blinking eye of a dragon behind the game screen. Programmed by Brody Lockhart (who we feel is one of the premier programmers in the field), any version of *Shanghai* is worth the purchase for hours of strategic entertainment.

#### **The Avalon Hill Game Company**

4517 Harford Road  
Baltimore MD 21214  
(301) 254-9200

#### **Wooden Ships & Iron Men**

\*\*

Commodore 64/128 version \$35

Based on the popular board game of the same name, this offering would have made more of an impact if MicroProse had not released *Pirates!* As it is, *Wooden Ships & Iron Men* has many problems: extremely limited graphics, ineffective sounds, and a combat phase that reveals nothing of the final outcome until the computer declares a winner. As a result, *Wooden Ships &*

Iron Men is a poor substitute for Pirates! In our opinion, this offering would have been best left as a board game and not even brought to the computer unless the graphics could have been updated to the minimum acceptable technological levels in use today. On a C64/128, we've seen graphics that were truly amazing for an 8-bit machine. The Avalon Hill Game Company may know a lot about board games, but few of their computer games have come up to par. Leave this one alone!

## News and new products

### Cinemaware, Inc.

4165 Thousand Oaks Drive  
Westlake Village CA 91362  
(805) 495-6515

Previously distributed by Mindscape, Cinemaware is out on its own (with a new address) and should be quite successful in its ventures. For example, they now offer *The Three Stooges*, a unique and hilarious game for the Commodore Amiga, C64/128, and IBM micros and compatibles, in which the famous trio rescues a retirement home. Cinemaware also plans a fall release of *The Lords of the Rising Sun*, the first real-time historical environment dealing with the Japanese Civil War of the 12th century. Historically accurate, this war game lets you command entire armies in real time. Encounters can be negotiated, and individual troops ordered into action. There are five interactive arcade scenarios within the game. If you get too good, the opposing generals send out ninjas to do away with you! As is the case with SSI, Cinemaware is most considerate of the IBM micro consumer. Included in each package is a 5¼" and 3½" disk format, with graphics modes covering CGA and EGA. There's no need to send in a coupon for another disk format. *Defender of the Crown* is also now available for the Apple IIGS, as is the company's controversial and provocative *King of Chicago* adventure "movie." All in all, Cinemaware is destined to be one of the leading entertainment software producers for a variety of computer systems.

### Data East USA, Inc.

470 Needles Drive  
San Jose CA 95112  
(408) 286-7074

Popular motion pictures have always been great grist for the software developer's mill. For example, not only is *Willow* being developed into a software adventure (see the entry under Mindscape elsewhere in this column), but *Platoon* is also being written into a software simulation by Data East. As in the movie, *Platoon* does not have a winner. The user parallels the movie experience through various steps. The goal is to keep a platoon of five men alive through various missions, and keep their sanity and morale intact as

well. With these objectives, you must return the platoon safely to base. This simulation is for the IBM PC and clones, Atari ST, and C64/128 computers. Prices for these versions are \$39.95, \$44.95, and \$29.95, respectively.

Two new programs have also been released with distribution arranged through Electronic Arts. The first is *Cosmic Relief*, a multi-level, animated action adventure. Your goal is to halt an asteroid that is heading toward Earth. The only man who can stop the impending doom is Professor Renegade — and you've got to find him! You select one of five famous adventurers to find the professor, take on a wide range of strange adversaries, and collect equally strange items needed for your trek. This program has been released for the Atari ST (\$34.95), Commodore Amiga (\$34.95), and C64/128 (\$24.95). The second offering is *Napoleon in Russia — Borodino 1812*, which recreates the battle that was the turning point of Napoleon's fortunes. You can practice with short skirmishes or fight the entire three-day battle, in command of infantry, cavalry, and artillery divisions. The game is available for Atari 8-bit computers and the C64/128 (\$24.95). Both of these games were released in IBM and Apple II formats this summer.

### Epyx, Inc.

600 Galveston Drive  
P.O. Box 8020  
Redwood City CA 94063  
(415) 366-0606

Two interesting games that we recently announced in this column have now shipped. The first is 4 x 4, an off-road racing game that lets you race a four-wheel drive vehicle to victory across sand, mud, mountains, and ice. You can customize your truck to suit whatever special needs will be required for your particular racing event. The second offering, *The Games*, includes seven Olympic events that were presented in Calgary, Alberta. Downhill skiing, slalom, luge, figure skating, ski jumping, cross-country skiing, and oval-track speed skating are offered. As many as eight players can be involved in this computer-based competition. Opening, closing, and awards ceremonies are all depicted using the actual Calgary pageantry. Both of these games are for the C64/128 computer.

### Mindscape Inc.

3444 Dundee Road  
Northbrook IL 60062  
(312) 480-7667

*Willow*, the fantasy film from George Lucas and Ron Howard, is now an entertaining computer adventure from Mindscape. *Willow* follows the exploits of an unlikely hero in a battle that takes him from his peaceful village into a world filled with giant Daikinis, brownies, and fairies.

This game closely follows the film's storyline, and players join the screen stars on a journey racing through dungeons, traversing dark woods, blasting through ice caves, and battling fierce Nockmaar soldiers who threaten their quest. Players are free to take on different roles along the way until their pursuit of the villainous minions of Bavmorda meets with victory. Supporting both EGA and CGA boards, *Willow* is for IBM micros and compatibles at \$39.95.

### PBI Software, Inc.

1163 Triton Drive  
Foster City CA 94404  
(415) 349-8765

Two new entertainment offerings have been released by PBI. The first, *Galactic Conquest*, is a futuristic version of the company's *Strategic Conquest* strategy and tactics game. This multiplayer, space-based game has the player attempting to control the entire universe by expanding his power base to produce more forces to conquer other planets (and eventually entire solar systems). This offering is for the Apple IIGS. The second new game is *Alien Mind*, a space arcade adventure that has nine different levels and requires players to neutralize hundreds of adversaries to regain control of an experimental research space station. This game is also for the Apple IIGS.

### Spectrum HoloByte

A division of SPHERE  
2061 Challenger Drive  
Alameda CA 94501  
(415) 522-3584

The first torpedo boat simulation has been released for the Macintosh. Entitled *PT-109*, this program was written by the folks at Digital Illusions. It is a masterful follow-up to their earlier *GATO* submarine simulation. The software puts the player at the helm of the PT-109, the most famous PT boat of World War II. There are several South Pacific theaters of action, including the Solomon Islands. There are also 45 missions (both day and night), four 90° bridge views, a binocular view, detailed maps and damage reports, realistic enemy ships and planes, control panels and gauges, variable wave action on missions, a save-game option, a practice-tactics mode, flares and smoke screens, and life-like explosions and sound effects. The game is \$49.95, with versions for IBM micros and compatibles and the Apple IIGS coming soon.

### Strategic Simulations, Inc.

Though SSI is working away on its AD&D™ computer games, the company hasn't neglected other new products or the conversion of popular programs for a variety of systems. The latest offering from SSI's entertainment stable is *Stellar Crusade*, initially released in Atari ST

formats. Two groups have embarked on a wild race to control a vital star cluster. Though small in size, this star cluster possesses some valuable planets that either the player or his opponent will want. Ownership requires might, and might requires starships. You design your own starships in a variety of models ranging from scouts to battlecruisers, all assigned to their own task forces. Seven separate scenarios are included with this space-action delight.

SSI (like Cinemaware, Inc.) is one of the few companies thoughtful enough to include both 5¼" and 3½" format disks for their IBM games. Congratulations for your consideration of the consumer!

The first official AD&D computer game, *Pool of Radiance*, was released in August. This is a fantasy role-playing game that, according to SSI, has one of the most challenging multiple-character environments ever offered to computer gamers. *Pool of Radiance* combines state-of-the-art three-dimensional and overhead graphics, and allows the player to select either detailed tactical combat or computer controlled combat. Release in C64/128 format took place in August; IBM micros and compatibles and the Apple II versions come this fall. Additional formats are currently being evaluated.

The second AD&D® game is SSI's first action game entitled *Heroes of the Lance*. This joystick-controlled, single-player game is set in TSR's DRAGONLANCE® game world. The player controls the eight *Heroes of the Lance* characters. This game was released this summer in formats for the C64/128, Atari ST, IBM micros and compatibles, and the Commodore Amiga. Other system formats are currently being evaluated.

The third AD&D computer game offering will be *The Dungeon Masters Assistant—Volume 1, Encounters*. This is the first AD&D game-utility program designed for traditional AD&D game play. The program includes over 1,300 pregenerated monsters and characters, as well as more than 1,000 separate encounters. This utility will be released for the Apple II family, C64/128 machines, and IBM micros and compatibles this fall.

Another AD&D game forthcoming includes an interactive, movie-style training ground based on TSR's FORGOTTEN REALMS™ setting. The levels and experience earned in the training city of Hillsfar will be transferable into other AD&D computer games. This offering will be released this winter for the C64/128 and IBM micros and compatibles, with other system conversions to be chosen later. SSI's AD&D games will present a wide range of fantasy role-playing environments for many seasons to come!

Additional new SSI games include a Napoleonic construction set, a B-17 World War II role-playing game, and a new World War II game set in both the Pacific and European theaters. The company's *Ques-*

*tron II* has also been released in formats for the Apple II, Apple IIGS, Atari ST, and Commodore Amiga (see the review elsewhere in this column). As a final note, all SSI games are now distributed by Electronic Arts.

## Clue corner

### Autoduel (Origin Systems)

First, if you are in the middle of a no-win situation, such as being stuck on an open road with no power in your car's power plant, or perhaps under attack by four laser-using cars, simply hit Quit and reboot the game. You'll find yourself and your car at the truck stop. Second, if you sell a car at the salvage yard, offer to sell the entire car. Don't sell your own vehicle; select the option to sell your weapons. Only sell a weapon or two and then offer to sell your car again. Once in a great while, you might get an exceptional offer. Third, remember "San Antonio Rose." Last, buy a clone and leave the place where you purchased it, making certain that you're not in Boston or New York. If you get shot or killed, allow your Health to go below zero. Instead of going to a negative number, your health will go up to 99! If you go to the Gold Cross after this has occurred and ask to be healed, they tell you that you are as fit as a fiddle. Play on, and don't forget: You still have your clone!

Anonymous  
Illinois

### Bard's Tale I (Interplay)

Here are a few hints for players who are assembling a new group:

1. Often, if different classes tip the bartender the same amount of gold, he'll offer different information.
2. First-level Monks *without* weapons inflict the most damage.
3. El Cid of ATEAM (the preassembled group on the character disk) possesses an *extremely* useful Firehorn.
4. Poison Needle is the only trap you'll find on wine cellar chests.
5. Don't use any warriors in your party. Warriors have no special abilities. A paladin, monk, or hunter is preferable to a warrior.

Vivek Sharma  
No address

### Faery Tale Adventure (MicroIllusions)

1. Seek the dragon's lair in the mountains.
2. Use the shell to call a trusty friend.
3. Get the golden lasso, but beware the witch's vision.
4. Kindness can be earned for a price set by the golden goose.
5. Get the goose with the golden rope.
6. Beware the "pits" in the field on the way to the witch's castle.
7. An idol guards the tomb.
8. Find the wand as soon as possible.
9. Magic abounds in the tomb.

Craig "Thor" Pirrall  
Scwensville, Penn.

## Might and Magic (New World Computing)

Accept Percella's offer at Section A2-0,15 to find a King's Pass. Here is the order for silver messages: F, E, D, B, A, C. Once they are in this order, read them from top to bottom. The order for the gold messages is 8, 5, 3, 9, 1, 4, 6, 2, 7; you read them the same as the silver ones. Finally, remember each section and dungeon is based on a 15 x 15 grid.

David Methven  
Norman, Okla.

The dungeon in the Hawkseye Hills is a giant magical square that happens to be the famous one created by the German woodcarver, Dürer. The numbers marked by asterisks in the following chart are the numbers you enter on the keyboard:

16	3*	2*	13
5*	10	11	8*
9*	6*	7*	12
4*	15		1*

Also, search for the prisoner inside Doom's innards.

Daniel Myers  
Fairfield, Conn.

My tips deal with Erliquin's town treasure. Create a first-level party in Sorpigel (it works best with two clerics and no archer). Get to Erliquin without dying. Then, send your characters out in twos to find the treasure (located, among other places, in the training grounds). Steal the treasure. One of your two characters will probably be killed by the traps, so this can only be done six times. Try to get back to the inn. When confronted by the guards, run. Eventually, you'll make it. Give the treasure to a member of your regular party, and the guards won't stop you. Repeat this process until all of the temporary characters have been killed by the traps. This affords your regular party with about 3,600 gold and some 60 gems.

Grant Reaber  
Seattle, Wash.

### Wizard's Crown (SSI)

1. When confronting Wardpact Demons and White Rabbits, ask for Quick Combat; it works much better.

2. Increase a fighter's scan and put him out front, as fighters are better able to protect themselves in the open.

3. Keep *anything* you find that says "Reinforcing."

Russ Mitchell  
Newport, R.I.

The response to the Beasties Awards selection process is definitely improving. Keep those cards and letters coming in and vote for your favorite software entertainment of this year. Send your votes to:

Hartley and Patricia Lesser  
179 Pebble Place  
San Ramon CA 94583

Thanks in advance for your response!  
Until next month, game on!

Ω

## Computer-Games Conversion Chart

### Accolade (408) 296-8400

Test *Drive* to Apple II family

### Activision (415) 329-0800

*Maniac Mansion* to IBM micros and compatibles (can access VGA, EGA, CGA, MCGA, and Hercules graphics boards)

### IntelliCreations, Inc. (Datasoft) (818) 886-5922

*Tomahawk* to Apple IIGS

### Electronic Arts (415) 571-7171

*Alternate Reality: The City* to Commodore Amiga and IBM micros and compatibles

(IBM version can access EGA and CGA graphics boards)

*Lords of Conquest* to Atari ST

### Epyx, Inc. (415) 366-0606

*Street Sports Baseball* to IBM micros and compatibles (can access CGA graphics boards only)

*Street Sports Soccer* to C64/128

*Street Sports Basketball* to Apple II and IBM micros and compatibles (IBM version

can access CGA and Hercules graphics boards)

*Destroyer* to Apple IIGS

*Spiderbot* to IBM micros and compatibles (can access CGA graphics boards only)

*Deathsword* to Apple II series and Atari ST

*Arctic Antics (Spy vs. Spy)* to Atari 8-bit computers

### Paragon Software (412) 838-1166

*Alien Fires* to IBM micros and compatibles

*Master Ninja* to C64/128

*Twilight's Ransom* to Atari ST, Commodore Amiga, Macintosh, and C64/128

### Strategic Simulations, Inc. (415) 964-1353

*B-24* to Atari ST

*Gettysburg: The turning Point* to Commodore Amiga

*Questron II* to IBM micros and compatibles

*Shiloh: Grant's Trial West* to Commodore Amiga and Atari ST

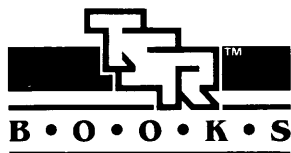
*Sons of Liberty* to IBM micros and compatibles

*Wargame Construction Set* to IBM micros and compatibles

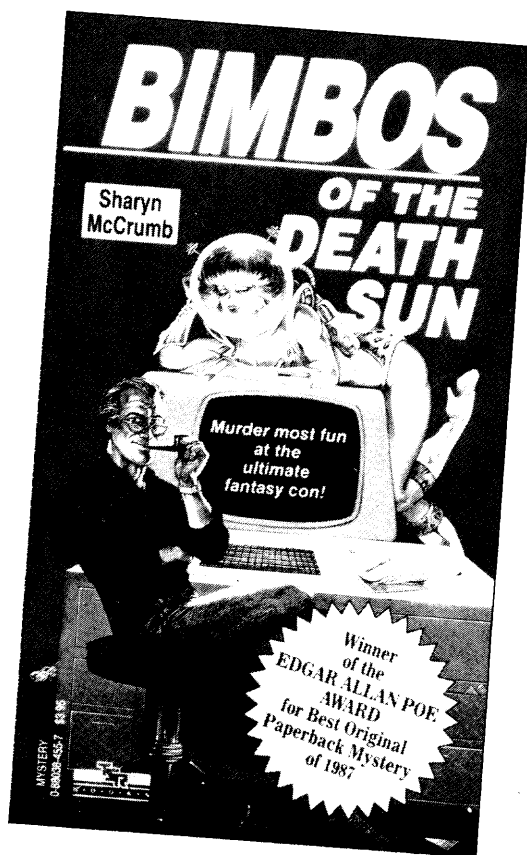
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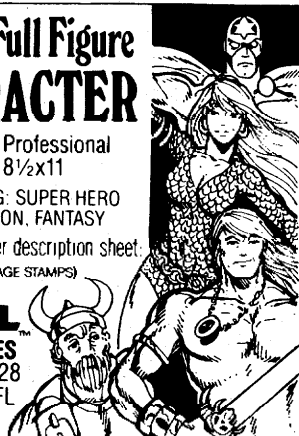
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Continued from page 13  
creatures which exist outside the normal flow of time, however. They do not have detailed knowledge of the entire continuum; thus, the time elemental is able to move a character to a location of a character's choosing by a considerable amount — say 1,000 years or so, with a wide margin for error. Furthermore, once a time elemental moves a character, there is no guarantee that it will be there to move him back. The plane of Time is a demi-plane, a timeless void located somewhere (or perhaps somewhere) within the Ethereal plane (see *Manual of the Planes*, page 21).

Can barghests be turned by clerics? Does holy water harm them?

Does a *protection from evil* keep them from attacking? Exactly how large are barghests, and what are their armor classes? How do you determine their damage bonuses?

Barghests of 8 + 8 HD or less may be turned as specials, but barghests of 9 + 9 HD or more cannot be turned. Holy water inflicts standard (1d6 + 1 hp) damage on barghests. *Protection from evil* does not keep barghests from attacking, but this spell does not prevent attacks from any other creatures. *Protection from evil* and *protection from evil 10' radius* keep extraplanar and summoned creatures from physically touching the protected creatures, and gives them armor-class and saving-throw bonuses. The attacking crea-

tures may still make ranged attacks, and can use weapons against the protected creatures. Barghests are extraplanar creatures. A barghest's armor class and damage bonus depends on its hit dice: 6 + 6 HD = AC 2, Dmg 2d4+6; 7+7HD = AC 1, Dmg 2d4 + 7; etc. Barghests are man-sized at 8 + 8 HD and below, and large at 9 + 9 HD and above.

Ω

# Role-playing Reviews



## *Fear and loathing on the horror campaign trail*

The grim horror game master says, "There are no heroes in the horror genre. There are only the dead victims — and the surviving victims."

The lighthearted horror game master says, "Hey, lighten up, man. We're here for some fun. You think anybody takes that supernatural stuff seriously? *Halloween? Nightmare on Elm Street? Night of the Living Dead?* Come on. That's hilarious."

Horror role-playing features two mutually antagonistic styles: one that takes horror with deadly seriousness and the other that gently pokes fun at it. For discussion, we'll refer to these two styles as grim horror and lighthearted horror.

### **Lighthearted horror**

The best-known role-playing game of this style is West End Games' GHOSTBUSTERS™ game. The important features of lighthearted horror are:

1. The player characters are tougher than their opponents, regardless of the apparent awesome powers of the monsters, as evidenced by the inevitable triumph of the good guys.

2. The characters are not going to die. They will suffer no greater physical or psychological torment than the typical D&D® game character reduced to his last hit points. If the PCs are terrified, it is cartoon terror; they hoot and gibber frantically, but we don't expect our stalwarts to suffer any long-term psychological trauma.

3. The treatments of magic, the supernatural, and incarnate evil are light, ironic, and straightforwardly implausible. Neither the campaign narratives, settings, nor themes need to be particularly coherent in tone or logic, because no one is supposed to take them seriously to start with. Some examples of this style in film might include

*Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* and *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* (as well as the aforementioned *Ghostbusters*).

Though this style is valid within its own rules and objectives, I hesitate to refer to it as "horror" role-playing. When elements of this style are found in role-playing games attempting to support grim horror themes, they may compromise the delicate atmosphere and tone necessary for horror.

### **Grim horror**

The best known role-playing game of this style is Chaosium's CALL OF CTHULHU® game (herein referred to as COC). The important features of grim horror are:

1. The monsters are much tougher than the player characters. If there are characters of "heroic" stature in this style, they are generally the monsters. Not even Conan stands a chance against Great Cthulhu.

2. The characters are very likely to lose their lives — or at least their minds — when they confront their supernatural opponents. This isn't just spook-bashing. In COC, the body count of PCs often outnumbers the body count of monsters.

3. Magic, the supernatural, and incarnate evil must be coherent, plausible, and emotionally compelling. The player need not actually believe in magic, the supernatural, or incarnate evil in a rational sense. At some emotional level, however, the player must participate (through his character) in a world where horror is very real, where the ironic, scoffing skepticism of the rational man is the greatest ally of the indomitable evil that lurks in every shadow, or just across the tissue-thin boundaries between our world and the Beyond.

### **Heroism vs. horror**

The standard model of role-playing, D&D-game-style fantasy, generally exhibits features close to those of lighthearted horror. D&D game PCs typically slaughter lots and lots of opponents (called "monsters," even when sporting only one-half hit dice) in early and middle stages of their adventures. In the end, they often confront a great and dark power, but it is almost assumed that there is at least a chance (and generally a substantial one) for the characters to overcome this great opponent. Further, though character death is possible, resurrection magic and the demands of heroic narrative generally assure most characters of making it to the last reel. Finally, though some of the finest campaigns offer coherent, carefully developed elements of magic, the supernatural, and evil, many fine campaigns offer only marginally coherent and plausible magical elements.

It's understandable that role-playing game designers instinctively build horror role-playing games on these established elements of fantasy role-playing games.

Unfortunately, since these elements are in direct conflict with the demands of an effective horror campaign, a designer may weaken the horror elements of his game as he strengthens the conventional role-playing elements.

### The “big two” horror games

Until the publication of Steve Jackson Games’ GURPS Horror and Palladium’s BEYOND THE SUPERNATURAL™ game, Pacesetter’s CHILL™ game and COC were the only two significant choices for horror FRP campaigns. The CHILL game, a product of the now-moribund Pacesetter, Inc., was a slick, professionally designed, and well-supported game using Pacesetter’s simple role-playing system. Some of its supplements were exceptional (especially *Vampires* and *Creature Feature*, both out of print). It even provided the necessary narrative trappings for cooperative PC adventuring, including an organization called S.A.V.E (Societas Albae Viae Eternitata — the Eternal Society of the White Way), to which all PCs belong, and which is dedicated to protecting an ignorant and uncaring world from the malignant entities of nearby dimensions. The game’s system, presentation, campaign setting, and adventures were admirably designed and executed. However, with the failure of Pacesetter itself, there’s little prospect for further support for Pacesetter game systems and little incentive to a game master looking for a horror RPG to use the CHILL game.

No one ever praised COC for its elegant system design. For example, the first edition detailed systems for delivering and receiving damage in melee and from firearms, but neglected to discuss the mechanics of healing. Oddly, it never occurred to me that this was a fault; I just assumed the game master was never supposed to leave any survivors. From all the evidence, nobody else has been all that concerned about weaknesses in the COC game system design, either.

COC is one of role-playing’s acknowledged classics. Its various supplements over the years have maintained an exceptional level of quality; several, including *Shadows of Yog-Sothoth* and *Masks of Nyarlathotep*, deserve consideration among the greatest pinnacles of the fantasy role-playing game design. So what makes COC so great?

1. **Narrative campaign background:** Lovecraft’s Cthulhu Mythos offers a cornucopia of original horrifying monsters of unimaginable malignancy and provides all the trappings of origins, motivations, and personalities necessary to bring these creatures to life. There are also the numerous established conventions of the Lovecraft universe — Miskatonic University in Arkham, the *Necronomicon* and *De Vermis Mysteriis*, the Elder Sign, and charmingly inbred families like the Whateleys — for designers and game masters to

exploit in weaving the narrative threads that bind together a coherent role-playing campaign.

2. **Tone and atmosphere:** Regardless of Lovecraft’s faults as a writer, he was a dedicated technician of tone and atmosphere. Remaining true to Lovecraft’s original writing, COC and its supplements are presented with a dry, matter-of-fact intellectualism, in the voice of the well-educated, skeptical academic who steadfastly cleaves to the tools of reason when confronted with unimaginable horror. Lovecraft’s formal, elevated diction, with its lovely sesquipedalian vocabulary (“What’s rugose, squamous, and taller than the Chrysler Building?”), is the trademark of the COC style. There are no cheap laughs here; the tone is dry and grimly straightforward. The narrators have no doubts about the reality of the horrors they have faced, and we take the narrators seriously because they are intelligent, well-spoken, and fiercely rational. **Abbott and Costello Meet Shub-Niggurath?** Not likely. Sherlock Holmes, with his keen weapons of pure reason, is more suited to this style of horror.

3. **Detective role-playing:** COC has become the preferred setting for detective role-playing for several reasons. First, no pure detective RPG has achieved much success. Some years ago, TSR’s GANGBUSTER™ game produced some first-class detective adventures, and Fantasy Games Unlimited’s DAREDEVILS™ game provided several hard-boiled detective scenarios, but neither system is well-known today. Second, COC’s high-toned, intellectual style is well-suited to careful, deliberate problem-solving. Third, conventional monster whacking, the staple of conflict and action for most RPGs, is almost useless in COC. The PCs are almost certain to get pulped, soul-sucked, or driven loony in a direct confrontation with even the more modest shambling horrors. Therefore, session time is more likely to be spent in puzzling over enigmas than in shoot-em-ups. Fourth, the essence of Cthulhu horror is mystery. What is going on here? Where did all these creatures come from? What do they want? Indeed, most of the antagonists are secret cultists or hapless victims in thrall who may not even know they serve Cthulhu’s will. Often, the Investigator’s only hope is to identify these mysterious servants and thwart their nefarious plots before the Gates to the Hyper-Geometrical Horrorlands are opened, ushering the practically invulnerable Elder Gods into our universe.

4. **Elegant props for adventures:** In COC, Chaosium, Inc. and its company of talented free-lance designers have pioneered and elaborated the use of simulated print artifacts as sources of clues and background information in player handouts. Hand-written notes, newspaper clippings, fragments from ancient manuscripts, business cards scrawled with cryptic messages — all are prepared to visually

support the atmosphere of the adventure and setting. They also provide important clues and information that the players can examine in character and speculate on the significance of each.

### Tone and setting

Each of the products reviewed below — the GURPS Horror game, the BEYOND THE SUPERNATURAL game (herein called BTS), *Cthulhu Now*, and **S. Petersen’s Field Guide to Cthulhu Monsters** — is a useful and satisfying supplement for game masters running horror campaigns. However, the least successful features of the GURPS Horror game are the consequences of a light, ironic, or wavering tone in the presentation and the lack of a substantial, dramatically compelling setting for horror role-playing. BTS sustains an effective tone and setting for 95% of the book, then dissipates it carelessly in the last few pages with game master notes and adventures completely unsuited for the established tone and narrative setting. *Cthulhu Now* effectively exploits the classic tone and narrative setting of Lovecraft’s Cthulhu Mythos. So substantial are COC’s tone and setting that **Petersen’s Guide** can even flirt with subtle humor without weakening its presentation.

### GURPS® Horror game

A GURPS® role-playing supplement  
96-page book  
Steve Jackson Games \$9.95  
**Design:** Scott Haring  
**Editing and design:** David Ladyman,  
J. David George, and Steve Jackson  
**Cover:** Michael Whelan

The GURPS Horror game is intended to support supernatural role-playing for a variety of settings and role-playing styles. It achieves this goal effectively (for the most part), but it lacks the persuasive charm of a game like COC, which has a rich campaign background and a narrower focus of tone and atmosphere.

**Systems:** The greatest strengths of the GURPS Horror game are the GURPS game systems and rules presentation. The GURPS game is a flexible and coherent tactical role-playing combat system — fun to game, not hideously complex, and adapted for use in numerous action-adventure genres. Steve Jackson Games’ design teams provide plenty of concrete examples, discussion, and guidelines to clarify applications of the abstract rules. The GURPS Horror game presents appropriate magic spells, skills, and psionics, permitting players to design characters admirably suited for confronting the supernatural. The concept of building disadvantages into characters offers charming role-playing hooks as well as additional points for character building. Certain details, particularly the side effects, drawbacks, and limitations associated with psionics, provide a sound foundation for character development.

These flexible, generic role-playing mechanics are necessary for a horror supplement that intends to support a wide range of horror settings and narratives, but they fail to provide a focus for the motivations and personalities of the player characters. This is good if the game master wants to run a variety of settings and narratives in his campaign, or if he wants to build his own distinctive horror campaign setting from scratch, but it's bad if the game master wants to provide an immediate sense of character and motivation for his players.

**Campaign settings:** "The Worlds of Horror" section describes three possible settings for a horror campaign: Victorian England, the Roaring Twenties, and the present. Given for each is a brief historical and social overview, a chart for typical jobs and salaries, a chart for costs of various services and equipment, and a timeline. A revision of the basic GURPS game's jobs, pay rules, and provisions for modern weapons is included. The sidebars are entertaining and informative, with colorful treatments of bribery, Prohibition, the Tommy gun, and modern legal procedures. One particularly nice bit is a collection of Victorian fictional and historical personalities (for example, Aleister Crowley, Count Dracula, Holmes, and Moriarty), with brief biographies and game statistics. This material is well done and evokes the flavor of the individual settings. On the other hand, focusing on one of these settings rather than surveying all three might have yielded a more distinctive, serviceable campaign background.

The practical advice in the campaigning section is thoughtful and insightful, with discussions of one-shot vs. extended campaigns, various approaches to presenting the supernatural foes, and techniques for making horror scary. The annotations in the excellent suggested viewing and reading sections reveal a sharp psychological sensitivity to the thematic roots and conventions of horror. But, sensitive as the designers are to horror's basic elements, they seem to falter in the translation of these elements for horror role-playing, particularly when compared with the more effective treatment available in COC.

For example, the GURPS Horror game identifies two basic types of PC: Just Plain Folks and Fearless Monster Stompers. Just Plain Folks are correctly identified as less suitable for campaign role-playing. Why would sensible folk, once having survived a horrifying adventure, ever go looking for more horror to mess around with? For campaign play, Fearless Monster Stompers are recommended — essentially FRPG PC parties (Indiana Jones fighters and Dr. Strange magic users) hunting otherworldly orcs in a 19th or 20th century setting. Such characters are workable in a supernatural campaign, but the analysis overlooks the basic COC character type — Just Plain Folks Who Are Anything But Fearless And Were Voted Most Likely To Get

Stomped By Monsters But Are Nevertheless Compelled By Circumstances To Confront Overwhelming Horror Anyway. Fearless Monster Stomping sounds too much like FRPG hack-and-slash in tone.

COC succeeds in creating a PC role in which Just Plain Folks are essentially trapped in a long-term campaign — a subtle trick but most effective for maintaining the properly oppressive and terrifying atmosphere of a horror campaign. Further, the Cabal, the GURPS Horror game's attempt at proposing an international conspiracy of supernatural villains as campaign antagonists, is a "loosely knit group of occult beings like vampires, mages, and lycanthropes" — a sort of trade association for Eldritch Horrors. In these weak spots of the "Campaigning" section, and in similar places in the "Horror Bestiary" and "The Worlds of Horror" sections, the necessary elements of a horror campaign are clearly recognized and appreciated, but the substance and presentation are not always persuasive.

**Creatures:** In the "Horror Bestiary," the lack of a coherent tone or campaign setting is most disappointing for horror role-playing. This section is similar to an encyclopedia of horror monsters, with well-developed examples of mechanics for each of the various types of horror creatures — aliens, creatures from the deep, demons, dead guys, vampires, ghosts, werewolves, cultists, mad scientists, psycho killers, and so on.

As a survey of the kinds of creatures found in Hollywood horror films, it is quite effective. But there are no original creatures here to stimulate the imagination, nor are any of the creatures treated in enough depth to develop the subtle shadings of mystery and horror. Presumably, game masters can provide all the detail and atmosphere on their own from their reading and viewing of classics of supernatural and horror — fair enough, but here this supplement is only adequate, not exciting.

The weakness of the lighthearted, ironic tone used here is clearest when the "Horror Bestiary" describes Cthulhoid monsters (which are referred to as "Things Man Was Not Meant to Know"). These rules, guidelines, and the campaign example, "The Lord Beneath the Ice," read like an unremarkable parody of a Cthulhu adventure outline. To be fair, the weakness of tone is only relative. When judged by its own purposes and style, the designers' approach here is perfectly appropriate — good reading and a plausible application of the GURPS Horror system. It is only by contrast to COC supplements and to BTS that this material seems so weak.

**Sample scenario:** The final test of an RPG system and campaign presentation lies in the adventure scenario. The adventure here, "The Haunting of Langley Manor," is based on a clever plot, is well structured, and has ample staging tips. But by contrast with the literary and film

horror classics listed on the preceding pages, the narrative, characters, tone, and setting of this scenario aren't particularly memorable. Furthermore, the presentation is somewhat awkward and confusing.

The introduction of the PCs to the scenario is anything but elegant. A PC receives a phone call from a stranger offering \$1,000 for aid with a supernatural matter — a ploy appropriate to the GHOSTBUSTERS game, perhaps ("Who ya gonna call?"), but setting the tone for horror is critical, and this is not a particularly inspiring opening gambit. Sure, this kind of machinery works in getting an adventure rolling, but it isn't much of a model for an ambitious GM.

The presentation of mystery role-playing adventures is a most difficult task for a game designer. In this scenario, the designers do not begin with a summary of the narrative or a discussion of organizing and staging the sequence of events. Instead, the GM learns what's going on as he reads through the adventure. This has the virtue of giving the GM a taste of the perplexity his players may have as they puzzle through the mystery.

On the other hand, I found the scenario difficult to scan for basic elements. I had to read carefully through the whole adventure to figure out what was going on and had to backtrack from time to time to puzzle out the motivations and roles of some of the characters. Matters are further complicated by placing much of the essential information in sidebars, thereby giving no clear indication of the sequence in which that material is to be read. This also implies that the sidebars aren't essential to understanding the adventure, when they really are. In general, I admire the use of sidebars for marginal notes, extended examples, and game-mastering tips. However, in presenting this scenario, the technique is not used effectively.

**Evaluation:** Judged on its own objectives, the GURPS Horror game is very successful. It provides effective systems mechanics and ample narrative and staging mechanics for horror role-playing campaigns in a variety of occult settings and for a wide range of role-playing styles, from lightly satirical to earnestly heroic. Considering the wide range of subjects, settings, and tones covered in this supplement, the treatments are remarkably comprehensive and effective. The only real design weakness is in the sample scenario, which is serviceable but unexceptional and not clearly presented. However, when compared to the industry standard, COC, the GURPS Horror game lacks a coherence of tone and presentation, and it lacks a persuasive horror setting like that of the Cthulhu Mythos.

The GURPS system works better than COC's basic role-playing system for tactical role-playing, and those already playing GURPS games will find the GURPS Horror game's mechanics useful. For a heroic supernatural campaign similar in tone to

most fantasy role-playing campaigns (with the PCs as fearless crusaders against evil occult horrors), this supplement is a suitable system. For more subtle, sophisticated horror, as that represented by COC, it is less suitable. For confirmed COC fans, only the concise treatments of historical campaign settings are of much interest.

### BEYOND THE SUPERNATURAL™ game

A horror/supernatural role-playing game  
255-page book  
Palladium Books \$19.95  
*Design:* Randy McCall, Kevin Siembieda,  
and Erick Wujcik  
*Editing:* Alex Marciniszyn and Florence  
Siembieda  
*Cover:* Richard Corben

BTS has three distinctive virtues:

1. Its systems are similar to common AD&D® and D&D game variants; as a result, those familiar with D&D-game-style systems can understand and adapt BTS with little difficulty.

2. Player character roles and rationales are well designed for the cooperative party model of role-playing — the model most familiar to fantasy role-players.

3. The occult and supernatural elements in the campaign background and setting are well developed and well written. The underlying rationale for supernatural events in the modern world is at least superficially plausible and is supported by many of the trappings of historical and legendary supernatural lore. The writings of the fictitious occult scholar, Victor Lazlo, and the straightforward, unsmirking tone of the rules and campaign presentation maintain the atmosphere necessary for an effective horror campaign. However, the game-master notes and sample scenarios do nothing to support these virtues, and are peculiarly inappropriate to the systems, PCs, and campaign background established in the rest of BTS. This flaw compromises what might otherwise have been a solid role-playing package.

**Systems:** BTS, like Palladium Books' other RPGs, is based on conventions familiar to all D&D game role-players: attributes, hit points, experience points, level advancements, and so forth. These systems also incorporate many of the refinements commonly found in D&D game variants — percentile skills, more elaborate combat and magic systems, and a profusion of charts and tables for nice bits of chrome and special effects — as well as a few distinctive developments of D&D game concepts. (Palladium's treatment of alignment is particularly noteworthy.)

Criticisms of D&D-game-style systems are fashionable and appropriate. In most instances, these systems are sloppy and incoherent, especially by comparison to later game systems like Chaosium's RUNE-QUEST® and the GURPS games. However, these games work, as is amply attested to by their popularity. In fact, I think it is the

very sloppiness and incoherence of these systems that make them so popular; they invite game masters to tinker endlessly with them.

BTS does a good job of creating character classes for occult role-playing. The classes — such as Arcanist, Latent Psychic, Natural/Genius, Parapsychologist, Physical Psychic, Psi Mechanic, Psychic Sensitive, and Ordinary People — are coherent and well motivated, represent a broad selection of characters commonly encountered in occult fiction and film, and provide an appropriate selection of talents and skills. Most PCs have some psychic power — a good idea, in that it gives the players something with which to play, provides a common bond that cuts across the otherwise contrasting PC roles, and sets the PCs off from the mundane masses who have no such intimate communication with the Beyond.

The character roles are cleverly and persuasively conceived. Take, for example, the Nega-Psychic. Ironically, his psychic power manifests itself in his adamant disbelief of supernatural phenomena. It is because he disbelieves and has such strong psychic talent that supernatural events have less effect on him. This class neatly provides a role for PCs who openly ridicule belief in the Other World, while still providing them with the magical talents that make role-playing fun.

BTS also provides the other mechanics necessary for horror and occult campaigning. Creatures have a "horror rating," and characters who fail to save vs. horror lose initiative and their first attack. There is a system for psychic dueling, using spell points and various attack modes, with characters making saves vs. psionic attacks to avoid injury or domination. The treatment of insanity has a realistic texture. The psychological effects, like alcoholism and drug addiction, are often more plausible than those found in COC.

**Campaign setting:** When it comes to psychic abilities, magical rituals, places of power, eldritch evils, and all that good supernatural stuff, BTS is at its best. The setting is contemporary. The treatment is earnest, consistent in tone, and takes the supernatural seriously — at least in terms of theme, setting, and narrative rigging for a horror campaign.

A good fantasy campaign framework needs a plausible rationale for the existence of magic and the supernatural. This isn't so difficult in medieval fantasy settings, where we moderns assume that a belief in magic, the divine, and demonic powers is common. However, in a modern 19th- or 20th-century setting, it's tough to persuasively assert the existence of vast powers and mysterious beings unknown to recognized historical or scientific authority. COC's Lovecraftian universe succeeds with a number of clever end-runs around history and science. For example, Lovecraft often invokes the good old science-fictional alien from somewhere

else — be it Aldebaran or Dimension X — with a history and science beyond our mortal ken. Another charming trick is his suggestion that only madmen can perceive the totally insane elements of the magical world; thus, only the various loony scholars and artists of the Cthulhu Mythos school can qualify as authorities on the history and nature of the unseen world.

BTS goes further than Lovecraft, in a fashion quite useful for a horror campaign, by providing a fairly coherent rationale for the existence of magical phenomena. This scheme is admirably devised, providing references to ancient Chinese geomancy and neolithic megaliths that are full of pseudoscientific gobbledygook and psychobabble. It also provides informative discussions of ley lines, electromagnetism, geopsychic energy, the rise and fall of power according to alignments of celestial bodies, and so forth. The so-called Places of Power are often located at multiple junctions of ley lines, weak points in the extracosmic continuum, crossroads of reality, nexus points where extradimensional boojums can enter our universe through summonings, or through temporary cross-rips of epic proportions.

In all, this campaign framework provides excellent narrative and mechanical tools for horror/supernatural scenario design. The multiplicity of dimensions just next door are conveniently accessible through man-made and natural rips in the fabric of space-time. This provides the GM with a rationale for introducing almost any creatures or beings of myth or imagination into his campaign. The triads — large areas of interdimensional instability similar to the Bermuda Triangle — are perfect places for supernatural adventures. The game mechanics based on this rationale are appealing. For example, characters receive bonuses to magic points when situated along ley lines, with greater bonuses at junctions of ley lines, and with quite spectacular bonuses when celestial bodies are properly aligned at equinoxes, solstices, and eclipses.

Presented as excerpts from the writings of the fictional psychic researcher Victor Lazlo, this supernatural background material is pretty convincing — good enough for fantasy role-playing at least. Not even COC gives a GM such powerful campaign tools. Lovecraft's literary universe is certainly rich in psychology and texture, and it has plenty of supernatural trappings and conventional settings, but it is hardly coherent. As a result, COC doesn't really attempt to analyze or fabricate a logical subtext for a role-playing campaign. In BTS, the subtext is explicit and well suited for scenario and campaign design.

**Creatures:** Compared with GURPS Horror, a large proportion of the creatures in BTS are fairly original or unusual. The Tectonic Entity, for example, is a being that creates its body out of materials at hand — old newspapers, garbage, toys, dirt and rocks, skeletal remains, and so on.

The text treatments are detailed and colorful. In general, this is quite good stuff. However, only the more powerful beings are integrated with the campaign framework established in the previous chapter. In addition, the visual presentation here is unimposing, with illustrations reminiscent of the early days of the D&D game.

**Gamemaster's section:** Up to this point, BTS is quite satisfactory — at times, even remarkably clever, equalling or surpassing its competition in horror/supernatural role-playing. Hereafter, the tone and execution shifts abruptly. The virtues of the preceding materials are abandoned, and the text strikes out in a completely different direction.

With a disconcerting lurch, we are propelled out of atmospheric, grim supernatural role-playing into the realm of the Grade C Hollywood horror-thriller flick. The accent shifts from plausible campaign backgrounds and nightmarish monsters to having good-natured, campy fun with the ludicrous conventions of popular horror films. I'm not suggesting that this type of role-playing won't work — but it is clearly more appropriate to the tone of a game like the GHOSTBUSTERS game, and it has nothing to do with the game we've been reading about for the last 192 pages.

Worse yet, these game-master tips are nothing special (even on their own terms). We get a couple of pages of common-sense GM tips on presenting RPG horror sessions, with a rather sad group of tables to aid in constructing scenarios. For instance, step one: roll for source of the paranormal phenomena (Egyptian, Polynesian, Aztec, etc.); step two: roll for location (Remote Wilderness, Rural Farmland, Small Town, Prosperous Urban Condominium and Shopping Area, etc.). As an example, a table for possible sites for a small town scenario is provided; roll for Empty Field, Feed Store, Five and Dime, Diner, etc. This is neither a particularly insightful presentation on horror campaign design nor an inspiring guide to creating scary — or funny — supernatural scenarios.

**Sample scenarios:** There are four sample adventures. The first two, "Teeny-Bopper Terror or The Tomb of the Perpetually Cool Adolescents" and "The Randolph Family Mansion," exploit none of the virtues of character design, mechanics, and campaign design of BTS. The tone of these adventures is more appropriate to the GHOSTBUSTERS or R. Talsorian's TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE™ games. The third scenario, "Window on the World," is a very nice, atmospheric introductory campaign session, although the villains seem more appropriate to superhero role-playing than to horror role-playing. The fourth scenario, "City Ruins," matches the strengths of BTS — but it is only two pages in length and is hardly developed enough to use.

**Evaluation:** In BTS, the systems and character development are well suited for horror role-playing. If you like D&D-game-

style role-playing, the systems, themes, tone, and session feel are likely to be familiar and satisfying. The campaign background — in its treatment of magic and otherworldly powers, doors to other dimensions, and supernatural beings — is a first-class example of role-playing narrative and setting design. These virtues are strong recommendations for purchasing BTS. The game-master notes and adventures, however, are a disappointment and are out of character with the rest of the text. Nonetheless, on the basis of the campaign materials alone, this is a very valuable resource for horror/supernatural role-playing game masters. In some ways, it even outshines its competitor, COC.

### **Cthulhu Now**

A CALL OF CTHULHU® game supplement  
154-page book (with 26 pages of play aids)  
Chaosium, Inc. \$17.95

Design: William Barton, Keith Herber,  
Sandy Petersen, Michael Szymanski, G.  
W. Thomas, William W. Workman, and  
Lynn Willis

Cover: Tom Sullivan

I have already sung the praises of COC supplements. *Cthulhu Now* does not disappoint. *Cthulhu Now* presents supplementary systems and notes for modern-day Cthulhu adventuring and offers four good-to-excellent Lovecraftian adventures in contemporary settings.

**System and campaign-background supplements:** First, we are given a brief rationale for modern science and scholarship's continued ignorance of archaeological evidence and occult events demonstrating the existence of the ancient beings and cultures of the Cthulhu Mythos. This rationale is totally unconvincing and, thankfully, totally unnecessary. We have already accepted the Cthulhu Mythos in spite of its shabby documentary trappings and will continue to accept it for the purposes of gaming because it's so delightfully lurid and evil.

Next, we get a brief update of Investigator skills, income, savings, and taxes. This is handy but probably not essential. GMs can probably figure most of this out on their own.

Next comes the good stuff — in particular, new equipment. This includes modern firearms, bullet-proof vests, and nuclear weapons, complete with statistics and rules for their use. Also included is an optional system for wound hit locations, with specific treatments of the peculiar morphologies of the Cthulhoid menagerie. I eagerly devoured the rules for firing bursts from AK-47s and Uzis to see if I could now dispatch shantaks and shoggoths with cool, Fearless Monster Stomping efficiency. Well, these modern weapons look like they'll be a lot of fun, and they will undoubtedly be tough on crazed cultists, but we're no closer to going toe-to-toe with Nameless Horrors than were our predecessors from the

Roaring Twenties.

The decision not to include statistics and mechanics for flame throwers, anti-tank guns, and Stinger missiles assures COC's continued design emphasis on ratiocination (not firepower) to combat the preternatural peril. Nonetheless, it's the thought that counts; I appreciate access to the latest in military hardware for my characters' futile gestures in a modern setting. Nuclear weapons? Sorry; Cthulhu just reforms 15 minutes later — only now he's radioactive, too. Thought you'd like to know.

The notes on early 20th century and modern forensic pathology (medical criminology) are fascinating reading and a real help to GMs trying to add realistic touches to scenarios. I appreciate the little medical tidbits concerning stiffes — e.g., "Insects of one kind or another are always present within 24 hours, as long as the outside temperature is above 40° F. The body begins putrescence in three to five days." This is handy stuff to know, especially with the high mortality rate in COC.

**The adventures:** The first adventure, "The City in the Sea," exploits modern, high-tech diving gear and minisubs in an exploration of the Atlantis theme. The narrative structure is adequate but a bit heavy-handed and linear by COC standards. There's plenty of background, setting, and personality detail, but it isn't particularly essential to the development of the scenario. The challenges faced by the PCs are interesting, and the Atlantis setting is lean but properly Lovecraftian. Its development of the Cthulhu Mythos is adequate but unexceptional. This weakest of the four scenario offerings is nonetheless respectable; it is quite suitable for an evening's entertainment.

"Dreams Dark and Deadly," the second scenario, is an excellent example of mystery role-playing in a horror context. There's an elegant abundance of evidence and detail: newspaper clippings, letters, other player handouts, lots of background, plenty of red herrings with just enough substance to make them seem significant, all sorts of misleading appearances and circumstances, and subtle and clever clues to the real puzzles behind the events. All of this detail is integral to the adventure without being tied to a narrow chronology or sequence of preordained events. It also provides some glitzy pseudotechnical/pseudopsychological trappings and mechanics for elements of the Cthulhu Mythos — a nice modern touch.

"Dreams Dark and Deadly" has the adorably epic scale of the finest Cthulhu adventures. As usual, if the PCs don't figure out the mystery and strike unerringly at the tiny vulnerabilities thereby revealed, the Earth is going to hell in a handbasket. As a model of mystery scenario design, and a classic horror/supernatural scenario, this is my pick of the lot.

The third adventure, "The Killer Out of Space," is also very good. Something goes

wrong with a space shuttle, which crashes in a wheat field in Kansas. The setting, plot, characters, presentation, and handouts are nicely done. There are especially fine touches with NPC small talk and characterization bits. I wasn't happy with a few details of narrative machinery. For one, PC entry into the scenario as presented in the text depends too heavily on coincidence. The simultaneous conjunction of the central event, the appearance of important NPCs, the investigators, and a peculiarly useful plot resource — all in one location — strains credulity and is a weakness in an otherwise substantial mystery plot and setting. There is also one cheesy major plot detail where Investigators are unfairly tricked into mistaking coincidental phenomena for causally linked events. Despite these sleazy but essentially good-natured plot tricks, the scenario is absorbing and entertaining.

"The Evil Stars," the final adventure, follows the theme of satanic-style heavy-metal rock stars and their fellow-traveler biker buddies on the road to the Ultimate Power Trip. The plot scale is impressive, and the Cthulhoid feel is right, though it struck me as a touch more direct in its treatment of graphic violence than we expect from Lovecraftian horror of the genteel Twenties (which, given the modern context, is perhaps as it should be). The scenario is clearly presented, and NPCs, evil plot, and essential game master rigging are well developed. There is even a handy, self-destructing NPC informant provided to guide dense or unlucky Investigators through the details of the mystery. When the PCs are at a point where the narrative thread to the climax is obvious, the NPC informant is conveniently removed so the PCs must rely on their own wits in the final confrontation.

The plot is open-ended, having a variety of potential conclusions, and the GM is left to improvise most of the details of the dramatic resolution — a disappointing weakness, since a detailed development of one of the possible endings could have been a guide and inspiration without railroading both plot and PCs toward a single conclusion. Of the four adventures, this has the most exclusively modern theme, and has the setting farthest from the standard COC character roles of scholarly or scientific Investigators. Perhaps these are the reasons why I'm not completely comfortable with "The Evil Stars," though I recognize in it all the necessary elements of a first-class Cthulhu scenario.

**Evaluation:** *Cthulhu Now* is going to make Cthulhu fans happy. The rules and background essays for contemporary COC role-playing are interesting and adequate, although misguided tactical gamers hoping for more muscle vs. Eldritch Horrors are barking up the wrong tree. The adventures are either quite good or very, very good, and the presentation and development of scenario materials, player and GM background, and handout props and clues

are up to Chaosium's highest standards.

**S. Petersen's Field Guide to Cthulhu Monsters: A Field Observer's Handbook of Preternatural Entities**

A CALL OF CTHULHU® game supplement  
64-page book

Chaosium, Inc. \$15.95

**Concept and text:** Sandy Petersen

**Cover, interior paintings, and illustrations:**  
Tom Sullivan

**Project editing, development, and production:** Lynn Willis

Oh, sure, this is a useful game reference, being a handy illustrated guide to the best-known denizens of the hypergeometrical realms of the premier fantasy horror game, but the ultimate recommendation for this supplement is that it is pretty and charming, and that it manages to take itself fairly seriously while maintaining an atmosphere of fun.

**The entities:** Twenty-seven of Lovecraft's greatest hits are showcased here with brief notes and commentary. These are accompanied by a full-page color rendering of each creature's comely features, a comparative size chart (no surprises; humans are rather dinky compared to most Eldritch Horrors), and informative little diagrams revealing the more intimate details of internal organs, methods of reproduction, feeding apparatus, and distinctive behavior patterns of the creature in question. These are very flattering portraits, you may be sure. From Azathoth to Yog-Sothoth, you can learn much more than you want to know about these little-known neighbors from the dimensions next door. The nicest details are the incomplete, passing references to Things Better Not Mentioned, and the simple, enigmatic diagrams of incidental interest, with delicately understated commentaries. For example, consider this entry on the Brain Storage Container, a sample of technology associated with the Fungi from Yggoth:

"The ultimate purpose of this cylinder is unclear. It contained a living human brain when discovered in northern Canada. Note the three plug-ins around the center grill."

The text presentation is a perfect example of Chaosium's masterful control of tone and diction. *Petersen's Guide* sounds like a matter-of-fact metabiology text in the academic style, full of gobbledygook, cited authorities, tentative conclusions, and slyly humorous observations — just the kind of barely detectable jokes so popular with scholarly types. Consider, for example, an excerpt discussing the Hound of Tindalos:

"Frankly, the Hound of Tindalos is beyond normal human comprehension and evaluation. Though it appears so, a Hound is not an organic creature. It is a

manifestation of the principle of perceptive being known to humans as 'foulness.' Foulness is a hyper-geometrical organizational axis shared by many of the entities described in this handbook; as a concept, foulness is uncomfortably difficult to summarize, because as humans we identify states of being as definitional elements rather than as polyclusters.

But, following Isinwyll (1987), we are not the poorer in merely nominating the Hound as a singularity of loathsomeness and terrifying hunger, considering what humanity would be like if our understanding of the Hound was more precise, more empathetic!"

Uh-huh. What an elegant way to say that something nasty does exist that doesn't exist, and that the sort-of-existent creature is just too nasty for us nice humans to imagine.

Also highly recommended are the bibliographical listings in the back of the book. You may have trouble scaring up articles like "Ghoul Reproduction in the Northeastern United States," (*Proceedings of the International Metaphysics Society 42:41-59*) or "A Telestial Network? Asymmetrical Hilbert Spaces Detected," (*Astrography News*, October 17, 1988, 11-14), at the local library, but tossing a few of these references into your campaign scenarios will give your players plenty to think about.

**The portraits:** Well, the color portraits are real, uh . . . nice. See for yourself. Personally, I found the obvious texture of the canvas a bit distracting, but aside from that little quibble, the things are very icky indeed. I like the diagrams and comparative height charts even better; their understated simplicity seems more in keeping with the academic tone of the book.

A "Scientific Key" is also present; this chart helps you quickly identify and distinguish one hyperdimensional species from another. I'm sure it will prove quite useful to hypernaturalists squabbling over whether they have, in fact, just observed a Star Vampire or Flying Polyp.

**Evaluation:** This is delicious. Buy several for your best friends and hope that some day the gaming hobby will produce works of equal charm to describe monstrous species for other fantasy and science-fiction role-playing settings.

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# TSR PREVIEWS

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Out of the mists  
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# FORUM

Continued from page 7

allow evil paladins and cavaliers. Come up with some evil adventures. The core rules have always allowed characters to choose evil as their alignments; perhaps the game should stop trying to prohibit and scorn the use of such characters, and do more to enhance the possibilities such characters have.

Sean Jump  
Corbin KY

Many gamers may have noticed the fold-up figures and buildings becoming more popular in TSR products. I would like to give some helpful hints to those gamers who like using these aids, in order to expand their uses of these 3-D props.

Besides the metal and plastic miniatures on the market, which are rather expensive, accessories for model railroads work well. HO scale is slightly smaller than 25mm, but most models and other accessories in this scale are compatible enough for all but perfectionists. Diorama builders have combined the landscaping materials for HO scale with 25mm-scale miniatures for

decades.

Several large book companies publish cut-and-assemble books with buildings in HO scale — in particular, Dover Publications (31 East Second Street, Mineola NY 11501). Some of these books are set in periods corresponding to those popular for RPGs. Two examples follow:

Gillon, Edmund V., Jr. *Cut and Assemble a Western Frontier Town*. (23736-2, \$3.95), for TSR's BOOT HILL® game; and

Smith, A. G. *Cut and Assemble Main Street*. (24473-3, \$4.50), for TSR's GANGBUSTERS™ game.

For gamers who want improvements on the fold-ups in the modules, here are a few tips:

1. Most buildings will not have a base; this saves paper, and the bottom does not show anyway. If the walls do not already have a brace, most will have space on the paper between parts for a narrow, rectangular bracing strip to be added at the base of the wall. When scored and folded under, the overlap at the corners will strengthen the corners and make them more square (see figures 1, 2, and 3). It is easiest to do this after all other assemblies are complete (attaching the roof and any protruding or inserted spaces on a wall, etc.).

2. If the fold-up is not already printed on cardboard or heavy stock, those pieces requiring additional strength should be glued to thin cardboard. Be sure the glue is dry before you cut, score, or fold these pieces.

3. Most glues will work, but Elmer's white glue is probably best; it is reasonably cheap, perfect for porous surfaces, and sets quickly. Don't rush your assembly if you want your building to stay together. Clothespins help if you don't want sticky fingers from holding pieces together until they set. Above all, don't use more glue than you need! You will make a mess of yourself, your building, and your workspace.

4. Last of all, even if you become bored with a module, keep the props! They can be used for other adventures, and props that are not too unusual or unique can be used for nearly any genre of RPG. Use extra fold-up people from other games or modules for those numerous but unimportant NPCs that no one would bother making a fold-up for, such as a mob, a force of soldiers, or pedestrians on the street.

Tim Emrick  
Whitestown IN

I have read many letters in "Forum" complaining that low-level magic-users are too weak and die too often. I agree. Magic-users start with very few hit points, one spell, and no armor or powerful weapons. I have a few suggestions which might help.

1. Start magic-users with 1-6 hp instead of 1-4. It will help them survive that difficult 1st level.

2. In my campaign, I let magic-users refer to the *Player's Handbook*, *Monster Manual*, and *Monster Manual II* any time during the game. My reasoning is that magic-users are the most intelligent of characters. Also, you might consider starting magic-users with an additional language for the same reason.

3. Allow magic-users to wear leather armor until attaining 4th level. It will give them that extra edge to help them survive.

4. Lastly, start magic-users with three or four scrolls of second- or third-level spells. It solves the "only one spell a day" problem without strengthening spell abilities at high levels.

Eric Burns  
West Buxton ME

Figure 1

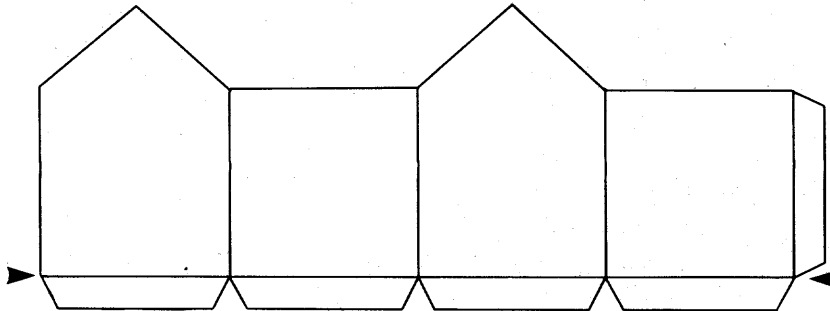


Figure 2

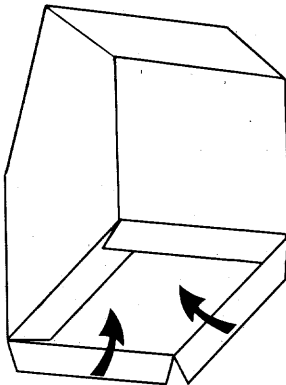
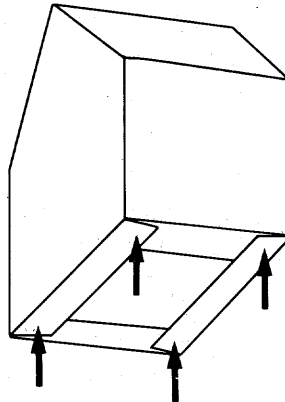


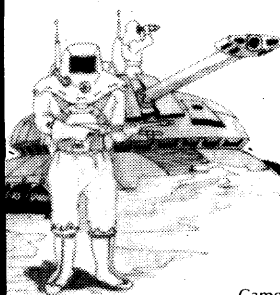
Figure 3



## STATE OF WAR

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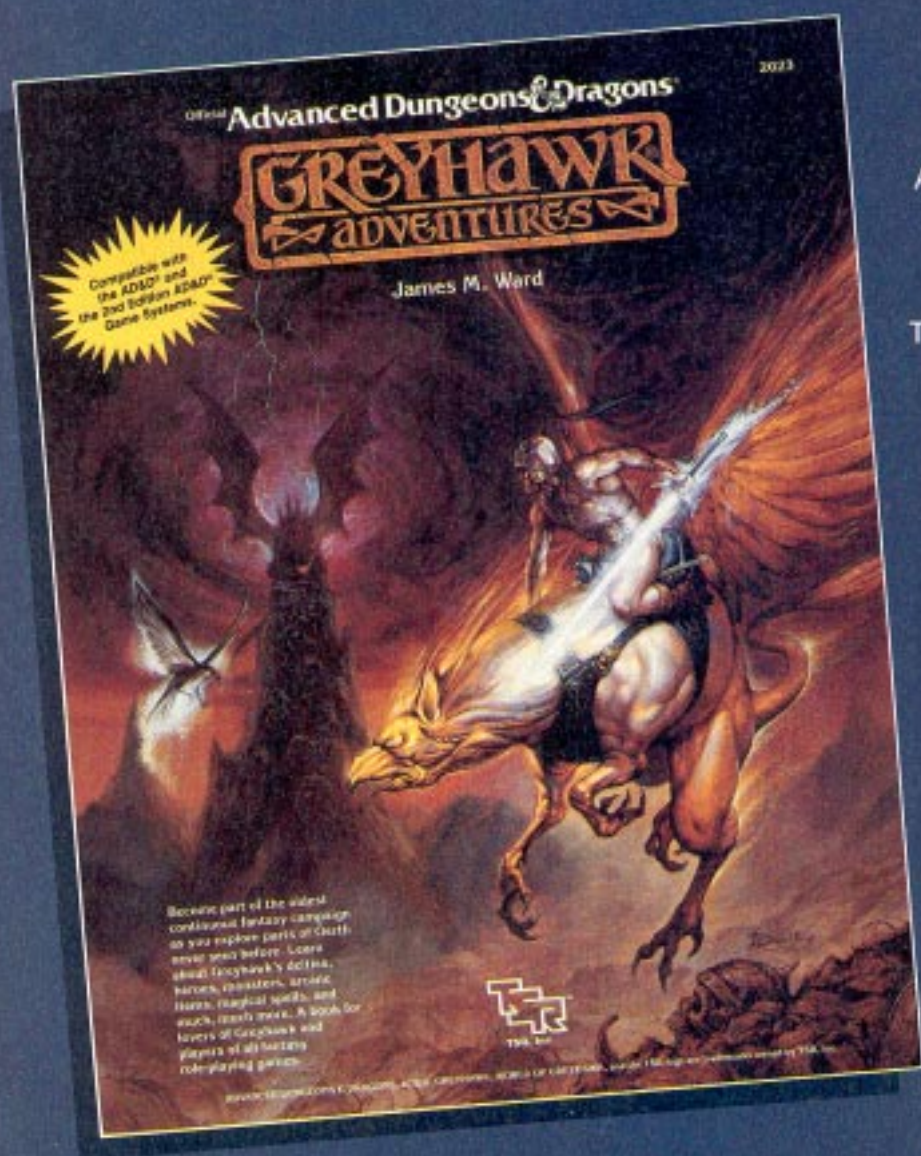
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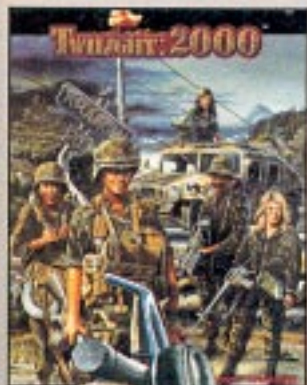
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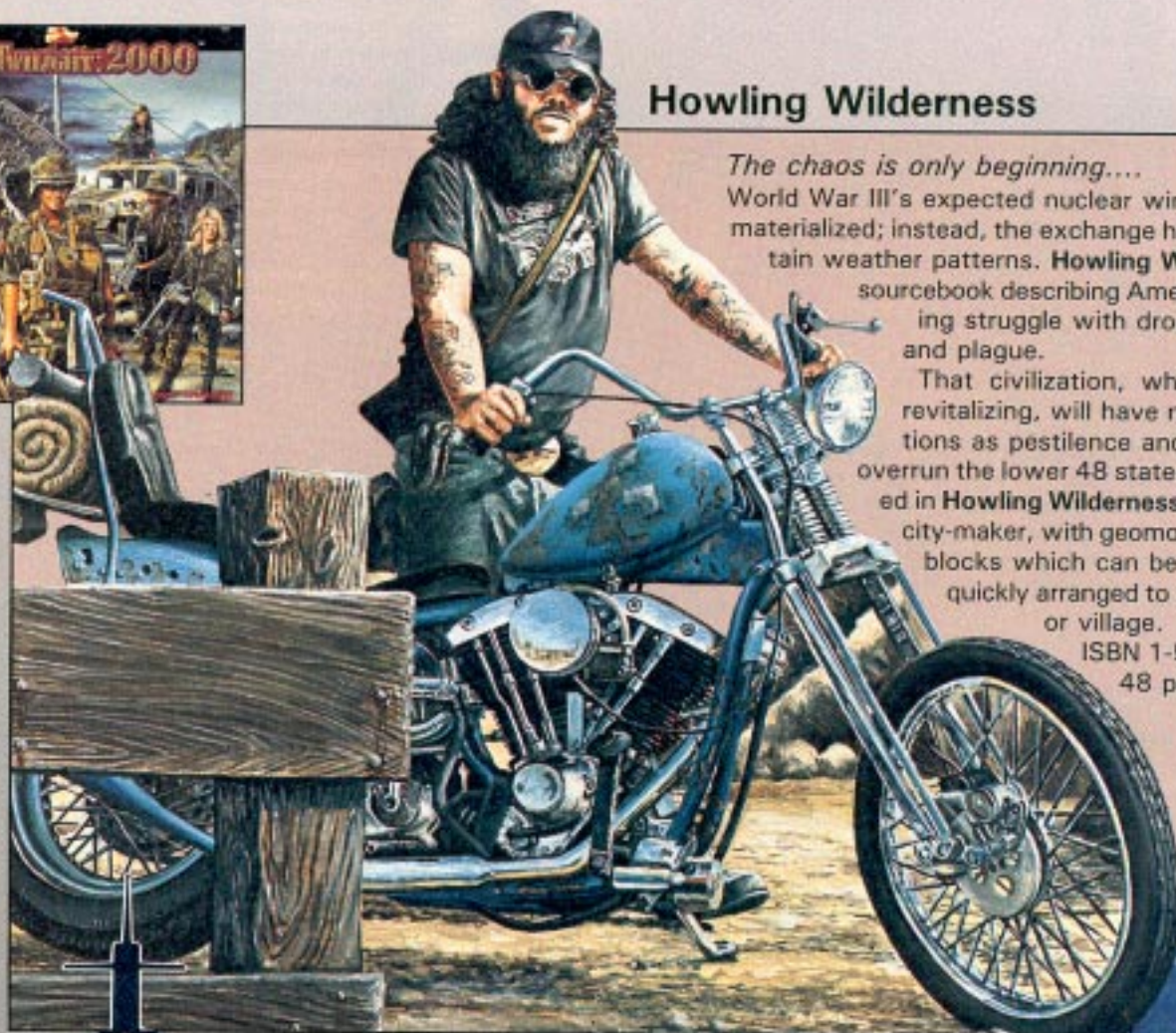
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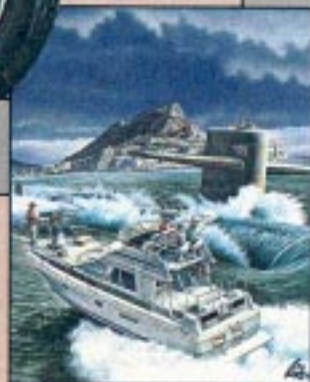
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By the way, if you haven't been subscribing to **Challenge**, you've missed some great **Twilight: 2000** articles, such as additional city-maker materials, descriptions of the USSR and Canada in 2000, and plenty of new equipment and vehicles.

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by Scott Haring

# The Game Wizards

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## Empires of the Sands *strikes back*

One of the things I looked forward to when I joined the TSR staff last fall was my chance to be in the "TSR Profiles" section of DRAGON® Magazine. Of course, this feature was discontinued shortly after I got here. When I asked what other opportunities for magazine fame were available, everyone suggested I write a "Game Wizards" column. All I needed was a subject — and it wasn't hard to come up with one.

I want to talk about my first big project at TSR: *Empires of the Sands*, a sourcebook for the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ setting. In that product, we invited questions and comments from the players. We've received quite a few responses — thank you! — and this is a good place to deal with some of your questions.

### The map problem

The first thing to clear up is a problem with the pull-out map. As many of you with the product already know, one side of the map has a glaring error. One of the transparencies used to make the map was reversed during printing, so the coastlines, rivers, and lakes are all reversed. After the sourcebook came back from the printer, I spotted that something was wrong with the map almost immediately (that's always the way it works, by the way — a mistake you didn't see every time you checked the product before it went to the printer leaps off the page at you the moment it comes back), but it took three of us to finally figure out the exact problem.

Those of you who wrote us to complain about the map also wanted to know how we were going to fix it. Here's what's going to happen: When *Empires of the Sands* is reprinted, the map will be corrected. At that time, we will have the printer run a few thousand extra copies of the new map, and we will send them to anyone who sends us a self-addressed, stamped envelope. An announcement will be made in this magazine when the map becomes available. We are sorry about the mix-up and hope this will take care of it.

### A look at Amn

Another problem: Thayze Selemchant, the merchant who brought Amn out of its civil war and heads up the Council of Six, is noted as having a strength of 18/56. Since he's a magic-user by profession, this is not possible according to the rules. I see Thayze as a physically imposing man whose real power stems from his political position and his force of will; he also happens to know some spells. DMs who want to keep their campaigns letter-perfect need to reduce his strength to 18; on the other hand, I think his unique strength makes him a more interesting character. Besides, he doesn't gain very much from his strength, so any DMs who want to keep it at 18/56 are welcome to do so.

Someone asked how the Council of Six, which closely regulates magic-users in Amn, treats visiting mages. I suppose that any wizard attached to a visiting trader would be given an exemption from the law, with the trader held responsible for anything the wizard does. If a wizard spent more than six months of any year in Amn, he or she would become subject to Amn law regarding magic-users in general.

Some letter-writers took exception to the presence of an electrum mine outside the town of Keczulla, pointing out that electrum is an alloy not found in nature. Ignoring the obvious arguments about what constitutes "natural" and what doesn't in a fantasy world, we can say that the electrum found in this mine is a result of mixing closely intertwined gold and silver deposits under geologic pressure over thousands of years. The result — electrum!

Other writers took exception to my giving Chardath Spulzeer of Spulzeer Castle an *unholy avenger* sword. The "unholy avenger" name implies that this sword is an evil twin of a *holy avenger* sword; if that were true, the sword could only be used fully by an antipaladin, a character class that does not exist in the official rules. All this is true, but I have always believed that NPCs are not bound

by the rules as player characters are, especially when the rules get in the way of a good story or an interesting characterization. By calling Spulzeer's sword an *unholy avenger* I wanted to quickly identify the sword's abilities, not its limitations. For the record, Spulzeer's sword is a one-of-a-kind sword with all the properties of a *holy avenger*, except that it does +10 hp damage to lawful-good beings. This sword only works in the hands of someone completely, totally, inhumanly evil. How evil? Being evil enough to awaken a 31st-level lich and murder your entire family at this lich's request seems evil enough for me.

I also received a few questions about the character Deepshadow, head of the Thieves' Guild in Athkatla in Amn. Though listed as a 5th-level thief/12th-level assassin, Deepshadow is *not* a dual-classed character. Many of you have pointed out in your letters that such a dual class is not allowed by the rules. Deepshadow is a character with two classes. As a young, wily adventurer, Deepshadow (who did not go by that name then) was content to be a thief. But he became dissatisfied with the way the guild was being run, and he got involved with guild politics. He quickly realized, however, that he could advance farther and faster in the hierarchy of the guild if he were an assassin, so he changed classes. Politically, it was a great decision; his background as a thief made him a popular choice of the rank and file of the guild, and his skills as an assassin came in handy when dealing with troublesome rivals. Today, Deepshadow has a strong grip on the Athkatla Thieves' Guild, and that doesn't seem likely to change soon.

### On to Calimshan

In the description of monsters appearing in Calimshan, I accidentally included the marid, which is a creature inhabiting the Elemental Plane of Water. This was a mistake; delete the marid from the list.

Another letter writer thought my population figures for the cities of Calimshan were too high. Calimport is listed with a year-round population of over two million. By comparison, the northern metropolis of Waterdeep barely breaks half a million in the busy season. I don't think this is too out of line — I see Calimport as a sort of Mexico City of the Forgotten Realms: huge and sprawling with a vast population, but most of its people are the forgotten poor. The wealth and power of Calimport is concentrated in a small upper class, so Calimport, while still a major city, does not wield the economic clout a city of its size otherwise might.

By the way, the population of Suldolphor, southeast of Calimshan and occasionally claimed by them, was left out of the sourcebook. It is 210,000.

Zanassu, the Demon Lord of the Spider Swamp in Calimshan, can return to the swamp 10 years after being physically destroyed. One letter writer asked if this required the aid of an evil sorcerer on this

plane, and if so, how powerful should that sorcerer be. I consulted with our expert on extradimensionality, Jeff Grubb, designer of the *Manual of the Planes* supplement for the AD&D® game. He said that in the case of a demon lord like Zannassu, it is most likely that he has taught a chant to his many followers in the swamp? This chant has no power when used by one person or even a small group, but when enough followers gather in one place and concentrate on returning Zannassu to the Prime Material Plane, the chant will do so. How many followers are required? Oh, say about 10,000.

On the eastern borders of Tethyr and Calimshan are some small mountain ranges that are not named on the maps. Geologically, they are extensions of the Snowflake Mountain range, and many people call them the Snowflake Mountains. Residents of the smaller villages in and near these mountains, however, have their own names for them. The mountains on the eastern border of Calimshan are locally known as the Embooli Mountains, named after a famous local ruler dead for over 300 years. In Tethyr, the two mountainous areas to the east are known as the Eastland and Small Eastland Mountains.

#### Other questions

At the bottom of each filled-out Character Record Sheet, the encumbrance of

each member of the Company of Eight is preceded by a mark that looks like a squiggly equal sign  $\approx$ . Some letter writers didn't recognize it as the mathematical symbol for "approximately equal to." Since each character carries some of his equipment on his horse and some in his pack, switching back and forth depending on the situation, we can only guess at his encumbrance on a record sheet. During play, of course, each player is expected to know his character's encumbrance more precisely.

Another letter asked about the drow elves in the Forest of Mir. These drow do live underground, like drow everywhere, and have an extensive underground civilization. But they also spend a good deal of time above ground, which is unusual for their kind. Like drow elsewhere, these dark elves are also worshipers of Lolth.

Yet another letter writer had some questions about the climate of the three lands in the *Empires of the Sands*. Amn is located (roughly) between 30° and 40° north latitude; Tethyr is between 22° and 30° north; and Calimshan is between 14° and 22° north. The average annual rainfall is 25" in Amn, 20" in Tethyr, and only 8" in Calimshan. If you want to use the weather system published in the *Wilderness Survival Guide*, consider Amn to be temperate, and Tethyr and Calimshan to be subtropical.

And lastly, a number of would-be authors have asked permission to use parts of the *Empires of the Sands* as the settings for stories and modules submitted to DRAGON Magazine and DUNGEON® Adventures. Please be my guest! I am always eager to see what other people envision for particular places, characters, and countries in the Empires.

Thanks again for all the feedback and comments. I don't always have time to answer the mail I get on the various projects I work on, but I do read it all. Your opinions are important to us and help us make better games.



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# CONVENTION CALENDAR

## Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines **must** be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short, succinct, and under 150 words long.

The information given in the listing **must** include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

**WARNING:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December 1988 issue is the last Monday of October 1988. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 110, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the copy deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR UK Limited, The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to either Robin Jenkins or Roger E. Moore at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625 (U.S.A.). Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to Rik Rose at TSR UK Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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## SUNCOAST SKIRMISHES '88 September 30-October 2

SKIRMISHES presents the eighth-annual production of this popular gaming extravaganza. This event will take place at the Holiday Inn-Ashley Plaza, 111 West Fortune Street in Tampa, Fla. Room rates are \$50 for single or double occupancy. Events include AD&D®, TRAVELLER®, STAR FLEET BATTLE\*, and CAR WARS\* game events, along with Napoleonic, Seakrieg, and board gaming events, a KILLER\* tournament, a dealers' room, SCA demonstrations, and many other role-playing and historical events. Hotel reservations may be made by calling: (813) 223-1351. Registration fees are \$18 for the weekend. Send your registration fees to receive the program booklet. Write to: SKIRMISHES, P.O. Box 2097, Winter Haven FL 33883; or call: (813) 393-2146 or (813) 293-7983.

## U-CON 6, September 30-October 2

This adventure-gaming convention will be held at the Coffman Memorial Union at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn. Author and game designer John M. Ford will appear, and various AD&D® science-fiction, miniatures, and historical board games will be featured. Registration is \$5 by September 1, \$6 afterward, and \$7.50 at the door. Write to: U-CON 6, 700 Washington Avenue SE #1, Minneapolis MN 55414.

## JUST-A-CON, October 1-2

This broad-scope gaming convention will feature AD&D® and TRAVELLER: 2300\* tournaments, a miniatures contest run by the Charlotte Scale Modelers, lectures, entertainment, a host of role-playing and war games, a dealers' room, and more. Sponsored by the Commuter Information and Assistance department of the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, this event will be held at the Cone Center on the UNCC campus. Send an SASE to: JUST-A-CON I, 6335-1 Countryside Drive, Charlotte NC 28213.

## TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION VI October 1-2

This sixth-annual event will be held at the University of Toledo, Scott Park Campus, Toledo, Ohio. This convention will feature a variety of events, including tournament and demonstration games (role-playing, board, and miniatures), a miniatures-painting contest and clinics, game seminars, computer clubs and dealers, and a game auction (scheduled for both Saturday and Sunday). There will also be a special competition for high-school game clubs, encompassing many types of games. Over 125 games and events have been scheduled thus far. Send an SASE to: Mind Games, 3001 N. Reynolds Road, Toledo OH 43615; or call: (419)531-5540 Monday through Friday, between 4 and 8 PM.

## ARIZONA CON GAMES I, October 7-9

This game convention will be held in Tucson at the Plaza International Hotel. The featured guest is Tom Mulkey, designer for GDW's TWILIGHT: 2000\* game series. Over 15 tournaments are offered with first-place trophies. A fee of \$20 covers the Friday night social, tournaments on Saturday and Sunday, 24-hour gaming (in fantasy, miniatures, and war games), seminars, and admission to the dealers' room. Preregistration at the above amount continues until September 25 (the packet includes "dealer dollars"). Admission is otherwise \$25 at the door, or: \$5 for the Friday night social, \$13 for Saturday, and \$12 for Sunday. Write to: Arizona Con Games I, P.O. Box 40998, Tucson AZ 85717; or call: (602) 747-4263.

## COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS 14 October 7-9

This role-playing, board-gaming, and miniatures convention will be held at the Center City Convention Center in Schenectady, N.Y. The convention will have at least two AD&D® game tournaments (one sponsored by the RPGA™ Network), as well as a number of other AD&D® game events. There will also be TOP SECRET®, RUNEQUEST\*, BATTLETECH\*, STAR FLEET BATTLES\*, DIPLOMACY\*, and many other game events. In addition, this convention will feature an auction, a miniatures-painting contest, and costume contest. Gaming areas will be open 24 hours a day, and will include some all-night events. Registration is \$10 for the weekend, if paid before September 22. At-the-door registration is \$15 for the weekend, or \$4 for Friday and \$7 each for Saturday and Sunday. Event fees range from free to \$3 for each. Write to: COUNCIL OF FIVE NATIONS, c/o The Studio of Bridge & Games, 1639 Eastern Parkway, Schenectady NY 12309.

## DRAGON CON '88, October 7-9

This convention will be held at the Pierremont Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, Ga. Guests of honor include Alan Dean Foster, Fred Saberhagen, Margaret Weis, Tracy Hickman, Gary Gygax, and Larry Elmore. Registration is \$25 in advance, or \$30 at the door. Add \$1.25 per gaming tournament entry. Write to: DRAGON CON '88, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta GA 30362; or call: (800)456-1162 toll-free.

## ROVACON 13, October 7-9

This convention will be held at the Salem Civic Center in Salem, Va. (Roanoke Valley). Gaming events this year will occupy one half of the coliseum floor, with side rooms available for workshops and panels on gaming. Julian May is the guest of honor; she will be joined by Christopher Stasheff, Hal Clement, Judith Tarr, Susan Schwartz, Richard Pini, Kelly Freas, Bob Eggleton, Jean Elizabeth Martin, Lisa Cantrell, Rebecca Ore, and Allen Woldour. Film festivals, an awards banquet, a costume party, and hundreds of dealers' tables will also be offered. Gaming Coordinator Harry Shiflett is still looking for people to help with game mastering; interested

\* indicates an Alaskan convention.

individuals should write to him at: PO. Box 2672, Staunton VA 24401. For con information, write to: ROVACON, PO. Box 117, Salem VA 24153; or call: (703) 389-9400 after 5 P.M.

#### **DUPAGE GAME CON, October 8**

This gaming convention will be held once again in the SRC Building at the College of DuPage on 22nd Street and Lambert Road in Glen Ellyn, Ill. Planned festivities include role-playing, board, and miniatures game events, including AD&D®, DIPLOMACY\*, CIVILIZATION\*, BATTLETECH\*, and Napoleonic game events. Other events include a dealers' area, a silent auction, and many prizes awarded in several events. Admission is \$5 for the day; events cost \$2 each, with the winner(s) of each event receiving (in the form of prizes) the bulk of the ticket revenue collected for the event. Send an SASE to: DUPAGE GAME CON, 6636 West 23rd Street, Basement Apt., Berwyn IL 60402; or call: (312) 749-1597.

#### **FRONTIER WAR V, October 8-9**

The Dungeon Masters Association will present this two-day event at the Miller Park Pavilion in Bloomington, Ill. Featured events will include role-playing, board, and miniatures games, as well as a dealers' area and open-gaming space. Registration fees are \$3 per day, or \$5 for the weekend. Write to: Dungeon Masters Association, R.R. 2, Box 12, Danvers IL 61732.

#### **NOVAG IV, October 8-10**

Sponsored by the Northern Virginia Adventure Gamers (NOVAG), this fourth-annual adventure gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn — Washington-Dulles in Sterling, Va. The convention will include all aspects of adventure gaming, from historical board and miniatures games to science-fiction and fantasy role-playing games. Vendors and game presenters are invited. Write to: NOVAG, c/o Wargamers Hobby Shop, 101 E. Holly Avenue, Suite 16, Sterling VA 22170; or call: (703) 450-6738.

#### **SETCON I, October 8-9**

Sponsored by the RPGA™ Network and SETGA, this gaming convention will be held at the Kingwood Middle School in Kingwood, Texas. Preregistration fees are \$8 for both days; \$5 per day at the door. Write to: Chris Liao, 3502 Oak Gardens Drive, Kingwood TX 77339.

#### **CHICAGO MODEL & HOBBY SHOW October 13-16**

Sponsored by the Radio Control Hobby Trade Association, this fourth-annual event will be held at the O'Hare Expo Center in Rosemont, Ill. The convention has expanded by over 10,000 square feet this year in order to accommodate exhibitor demand. Over 2,000 retailers and distributors attended last year's show. Write to: CHICAGO MODEL & HOBBY SHOW, 2400 East Devon Avenue, Suite 205, Des Plaines IL 60019-9353; or call: (800) 323-5155 (in Illinois, call: (312) 299-3131).

#### **RUDICON 4, October 14-16**

Sponsored by the Rochester Wargamer's Association and Guild, this gaming convention will be held on the campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, N.Y. Events will include role-playing, wargaming, and miniatures features, as well as a dealers' room and more. For preregistration or dealers' packets, send an SASE to: RUDICON 4, c/o Student Directorate, One Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester NY 14623.

#### **CON\*STELLATION VII, October 21-23**

Sponsored by the North Alabama Science Fiction Association, this science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held at the Huntsville Hilton in Huntsville, Ala. John Varley will be the guest of honor, and Todd Hamilton will be the artist guest of honor. Features will include a dealers' room, art show, video room, open gaming, masquerade, SF and fantasy film and video contest, and a con suite. Registration is \$15 until September 6 and \$20 thereafter. Write to: CON\*STELLATION VII, c/o North Alabama Science Fiction Association, PO. Box 4857, Huntsville AL 35815-4857.

#### **NECRONOMICON '88, October 21-23**

This science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held at the Ashley Plaza Holiday Inn in Tampa, Fla. Guests of honor are Alan Dean Foster and Timothy Zahn. Other guests include Richard Lee Byers, Richard Louis Newman, Joseph Green, Mary Hanson-Roberts, Ken and Beth Mitchrone, Ray Aldridge, Ginger Curry, George M. Ewing, and John Brudy. The fan guest of honor will be chosen by a random drawing from all interested members registered by 6 P.M. Friday. The winner will have his membership refunded, receive a banquet ticket, have his hotel room paid for Friday and Saturday, and be allowed to judge the masquerade contest. Featured events include author and artist panels, an art show and auction, a Friday night fan cabaret, a full-contact trivia game, a special Superman\* trivia contest, role-playing games, filksinging, author readings, a Saturday night masquerade, an Official Vampire Pageant, and a charity auction (scheduled for Sunday afternoon). Membership is \$10 for three days if paid before September 15 and \$15 thereafter. One-day memberships are sold at the door at \$6 per day. Dealers' tables are \$35 plus membership costs for those staffing them. Hotel rates are \$48 for one to four persons. Write to: NECRONOMICON '88, PO. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569; or call: (813) 677-6347.

#### **OCTOBERFEST GAMING 1988 October 21-23**

Detroit's yearly Halloween role-playing games convention will once again be sponsored by the Detroit Gaming Center and the City of Detroit Recreation Department. The location is the Lighthouse Recreation Center on Riverside Drive in Detroit, Mich. Kevin Siembieda (ROBO-TECH\*, PALLADIUM RPG\*, MECHANIDS\*, HEROES UNLIMITED\*, and BEYOND THE SUPERNATURAL\* games) and Erick Wujcik (TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES\*, Revised RECON\*, and NINJAS AND SUPERSPIES\* games) are guests of honor. Events include: AD&D®, TRAVELLER\*, and other role-playing games; seminars; and a role-playing costume contest. Admission for this convention is free. Tournaments are \$2 to \$4, with winners receiving gift certificates from local stores. Write to: Erick Wujcik, PO. Box 1623, Detroit MI 48231; or call: (313) 833-3016.

#### **SYNDICON II, October 21-23**

A gaming feast will be served up at the Holiday Inn in Glen Ellyn, Ill. Guest of honor is TSR, Inc.'s Jon Pickens, who is involved with the creation of the second-edition AD&D® game. RPGA™ Network tournaments will include AD&D® game Feature, Masters, and extra events. Many other games will be available such as DC\* HEROES, BATTLETECH\*, ILLUMINATI\*, CAR WARS\*, and more! Fees are \$9 until September 15, \$12 thereafter, and \$15 at the door. Write to: WCSFA/SYNDICON, PO. Box A3981,

Chicago IL 60690; or call: (312) 462-7954.

#### **UNICON II, October 21-23**



To be held at the University of Alaska Anchorage, UNICON II will offer a variety of board and role-playing games, including the DIPLOMACY\*, RISK\*, TALISMAN\*, CAR WARS\*, and GAMMA WORLD® games, as well as an AD&D® game tournament. Some games will be set up for younger gamers, and a miniatures painting contest will be offered. Other activities include the running of the entire *Star Trek* movie series, open gaming, a dealers' room, a medieval fighting demonstration by the SCA, and demonstrations by various armed forces. Preregistration is \$8. Daily admission is \$5, or \$12 for all three days at the door. Write to: UAA Gaming Society, c/o Union of Students, 3211 Providence Drive, Anchorage AK 99508; or call Greg Gibbs at: (907) 786-4925.

#### **VILLE-CON '88, October 21-23**

This gaming extravaganza will be held on the campus of Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, MO. Special guests will include Jean Rabe, RPGA™ Network Coordinator; Rick Reid, Fluffy Quest author; and Skip Williams, DRAGON® Magazine's "Sage Advice" columnist. There will be RPGA™ Network sanctioned AD&D® game, MARVEL SUPER HEROES® game, GAMMA WORLD® game, PARANOIA\*, and TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES\* tournaments. Other games include DC HEROES\*, ROLEMASTER\*, WARHAMMER\*, TALISMAN\*, CYBORG COMMANDO\*, and TOP SECRET/S.I.™ games. Also featured will be a dealers' room, several war games, and a number of computer games. Some of the finest game masters in the Midwest will be in attendance. Cost for the weekend is \$5. Low-cost housing is available, and preregistration is encouraged. Write to: Tim Beach, Union Office, NWMSU, Maryville MO 64468; or call: (816) 562-1217.

#### **MAINESIL, October 28-30**

The Maine Society for Interactive Literature will hold this convention at the Hampton Inn in South Portland, Maine. Featured events will include your choice of three live role-playing games, each of which will be run by experienced game masters. These are semireal time, semireal space games (not board games) conducted over the entire weekend. Costumes and participatory play are encouraged for these events. Awards will be given at the closing ceremonies for best costumes and best characterizations. Registration for the convention and one game is \$25. Room rates are \$46 a night, which includes breakfast. Become your character for a weekend! Contact: Heidi Nilsen, 596 Dutton Hill Road, Gray ME 04039 (telephone (207) 657-4072); or Kevin and Susan Barrett, 540 Mammoth Road, Londonderry NH 03053 (telephone (603) 432-5905).

#### **OCTOBER FANTASY IV, October 28-30**

Enjoy a haunting weekend in Milwaukee, Wis., at a gaming convention which will feature several RPGA™ Network tournaments, including a three-round AD&D® game Feature, two-round AD&D® Masters, two-round CHILL\*, and two-round TOP SECRET/S.I.™ games. In addition, other role-playing games, strategy board games, war games, movies, a silent used-game auction, a dealers' area, and the fourth-annual raw liver toss will be held. Ghost of Honor for the weekend is Harold Johnson, director of TSR, Inc.'s Consumer Services Division. Preregistration fees are \$7 a day or \$12 for the weekend until October 1 (\$8 and \$15 thereafter). RPGA™

Network members get a \$2 discount. For more information, contact: Keith Polster, 1812 West Morgan Drive, Apt 6, West Bend WI 53905; or call: (414) 338-8498.

#### **WAR GAMERS WEEKEND, October 28-30**

This convention will be hosted by The Toy Soldier, located in Newburyport, Mass. The convention itself will be held at the Disabled American Veterans Hall (DAV), Route 1, in Newburyport, Mass. Events will include fantasy role-playing, historical miniatures, and board games and demonstrations. Registration for the weekend is \$10, and most events are an additional \$2. Write to: Chris Parker, c/o The Toy Soldier, PO. Box 148, Newburyport MA 01950; or call: (617) 462-8241.

#### **UMF-CON, October 29-30**

This role-playing and wargaming convention will be held at the Student Center of the University of Maine at Farmington in Farmington, Maine. Expect miniatures, AD&D®, TOP SECRET®, DIPLOMACY®, and board games, along with a costume contest (in honor of Halloween), miniatures-painting contest, murder mystery, and "Kare Bear Krunch II." UMF-CON is twice as big this year, but the admission fee has not changed. Registration costs are still \$5, and \$2 per game. Send an SASE to: Table Gaming Club, c/o Student Life Office, Student Center, 5 South Street, Farmington ME 04938.

#### **OMNICON 1988, November 4-6**

Sponsored by the North Carolina State University Science Fiction Society, this science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will be held on the North Carolina State University campus in Raleigh, N.C. Miniatures, role-playing, and board games are featured, with two RPGA™ Network AD&D® tournaments and a CHILL\* tournament (and possibly others). Science-fiction and fantasy literature will also be featured. A door-prize drawing will be held. Registration is \$2 for one day, or \$5 for the weekend. Registration begins at 5 P.M. Friday, and the con closes at 6 P.M. Sunday. Write to: OMNICON 1988, c/o Andrew Chilton or David Ridout, PO. Box 98052, Raleigh NC 27624; or call: (919) 847-6758.

#### **QUAD CON 88, November 4-6**

The RiverBend Gamers Association will hold this convention at the Sheraton Hotel, located at 17th Street and 3rd Avenue in Rock Island, Ill. Room rates are at a special nightly rate of \$44 for a single and \$53 for a double (for reservations, call: (800) 322-9803, or (800) 447-1297 if calling from outside Illinois). There is over 3,300 square feet of space in the two gaming rooms and about 2,080 square feet in the dealers' room. Featured events include AD&D®, D&D®, BATTLETECH\*, CHAMPIONS\*, RECON\*, MARVEL SUPER HEROES®, CALL OF CTHULHU\*, and other games, as well as a miniatures-painting contest, microarmor events, an ancients-to-future combat tournament, and a costume contest and party (no weapons, please). Prices are \$8 for the weekend, if received by October 1. Otherwise, costs are \$10 at the door, or \$5 per day. Write to: RiverBend Gamers Association, PO. Box 8421, Moline IL 61265.

#### **ROCK-CON XV GAME FAIR, November 5-6**

This gaming convention will be held at the Wagon Wheel Resort in Rockton, Ill., from 10 A.M. to midnight on Saturday and 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. on Sunday. Guests of honor will include E. Gary Gyga, Jim Ward, Tom Wham, and Lou Zocchi. Events will include an RPGA™ Network multi-round AD&D® game tournament, a large (40

booths) dealers' room, miniatures events and contests, and the Fifth Annual Rock-Con Auction, hosted by Rich Borg. In addition, door prizes will be given away every hour. Admission is \$5 for one or both days; there are no game fees. Send an SASE to: ROCK-CON XV GAME FAIR, 14225 Hansberry Road, Rockton IL 61072.

#### **SAN ANTONIO FANFAIR, November 5-6**

Bulldog Productions presents this small, fun comic-book, science-fiction, and film convention, to be held at a hotel to be announced. More than 60 dealers' tables, more than a dozen guests of honor, a masquerade, 24-hour gaming sessions, 24-hour video rooms, writers' workshops, an open convention suite, and a huge Saturday night party will be featured events. The anticipated attendance for this convention is 600. Tables are available for \$50-60. Admission fees are \$4 for Saturday, \$3 for Sunday, and \$5 for both days at the door only. Write to: Bulldog Productions, PO. Box 820488, Dallas TX 75382; or call: (214) 349-3367.

#### **DALLASCON 88 WINTERFEST November 11-13**

The largest gaming convention in the Southwest will be held at the Park Inn International Hotel in Irving, Texas. All types of board, miniatures, and role-playing game events will be featured, including a WRG Ancients and AD&D® game tournament. The convention also features a dealers' room, auction, movies, and open gaming. Write to: DALLASCON, PO. Box 867623, Plano TX 75086.

#### **SCI CON 10, November 11-13**

Sponsored by the Hampton Roads Science Fiction Association, this science-fiction and fantasy convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va. David Brin is guest of honor, David Mattingly is artist guest of honor, Bud Webster is fan guest of honor, and David Cherry is toastmaster. Kelly Freas and other guests will be in attendance. Panels, readings, video presentations, a costume contest, gaming, an art show, and more will also be featured. Memberships are \$15 until September 30 and \$20 at the door. Huckster tables (limit of two per customer and including one membership each) are \$60 each until September 30, and \$75 thereafter (if still available). Send an SASE to: SCI CON 10, Dept. FA, PO. Box 9434, Hampton VA 23670.

#### **TULARE-CON 10, November 12,**

This science-fiction, comic-book, and gaming convention will be held at the T.D.E.S. Hall in Tulare, Calif. Guests of honor will include artists Ron Lim, Chuck Austen, and Edward Luena. Other guests of honor will include special-effects designers John Goodwin and Scott Alexander. Activities will include movies, panels, workshops, and costume, art, and gaming contests. Admission is free. For information, contact: Bob Meyers, c/o Bob's Office Supplies and Stationers (B.O.S.S.), 227 South K Street, Tulare CA 93274; or call: (209) 686-2896.

#### **CONCON: THE CONSTANT CONVENTION November 13-14**

This gaming convention is held the second Saturday of each month at The Gamemaster in Arlington, Mass. This November's CONCON will be the first two-day event. Special features will include the Northeast Regional BATTLETECH\* Championship and CONCON Cup, and the BLOODBOWL\* Championship. Other events include WARHAMMER\* Fantasy and 40,000 miniatures battles, historical miniatures events,

and role-playing games. Write to: The Gamemaster, 444 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington MA 02174; or call: (617) 641-1580.

#### **SILVERCON, November 18-20**

This science-fiction, fantasy, and gaming convention will feature RPGA™ AD&D® and CHAMPIONS\* tournaments (among others), open gaming, panel discussions, art displays, a benefit auction, a dealers' room, and more. Dedicated to the memory of Manley Wade Wellman, SILVERCON will donate its profits to Mr. Wellman's widow to help defray her late husband's medical bills. Various science-fiction and fantasy authors and artists may appear, with a special emphasis on North Carolina and the South, and guests from the gaming and comics industries are expected. This convention will be held at the Great Smokies Hilton, Asheville, N.C. Memberships for all three days are \$20 before November 11, and \$25 at the door. Write to: SILVERCON, P.O. Box 8342, Asheville NC 28814.

#### **XANADU, November 18-20**

This annual convention will be held at the Nashville Ramada Inn, across from the airport. Jim Baen is guest of honor, and Wilson Tucker is M.C. Programming includes a costume contest, a dance, a 24-hour video room, and many panels. Several RPGA™ Network events are featured, with other game tournaments sponsored by a local games store. Registration for all three days is \$15 until November 1, or \$20 afterward. Write to: XANADU Convention, PO. Box 23281, Nashville TN 37202; or call: (615) 833-1345.

#### **CONTEX VI, November 25-27**

This science-fiction and fantasy convention, sponsored by Friends of Fandom, will be held at the Hyatt Regency West, 13210 Katy Freeway (at Eldridge), Houston, Tex. Guest of honor will be Joel Rosenberg, along with Cat Boxe Theatre, Jean Elizabeth Martin, and Randy Farran. Events include panels, merchants, clubs, fanzines, art, workshops, media, filking, costumes, auctions, contests, and open and tournament gaming. Registration is \$15 for three days until September 30. Write to: Friends of Fandom, PO. Box 266996, Houston TX 77207-6996; or call: (713) 475-8228. For hotel reservations, call the Hyatt at: (713) 558-1234.

#### **DALLAS FANTASY FAIR, November 25-27**

Bulldog Productions presents this full-scale comic-book, science-fiction, and film convention, which will be held at the Marriott Park Central, 7750 LBJ at Coit, in Dallas, Texas. This event will feature more than 140 dealers' tables, 100 guests of honor, an art show and auction, a masquerade, 24-hour gaming sessions, 24-hour Japanimation and video rooms, artists' and writers' workshops, readings, a dance, an open convention suite, and much more. The anticipated attendance for this convention is 2,000. Admission fees are \$15 for all three days if paid in advance or \$20 at the door. Write to: Bulldog Productions, PO. Box 820488, Dallas TX 75382; or call: (214) 349-3367.

Ω

# What Has . . .

Sneak previews of Palladium Books® products, errata, news, special articles about ROBOTECH™ and Japanese animation, T.M.N.T.®, new RPG characters, rules, and source material (not published anywhere else)?

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Oh, sure it's a self-serving promotional house organ. We want you to know all about us and buy our games by the truck load. But MOP isn't just another boring news flyer, it's a mini-magazine packed with useful and fun articles.

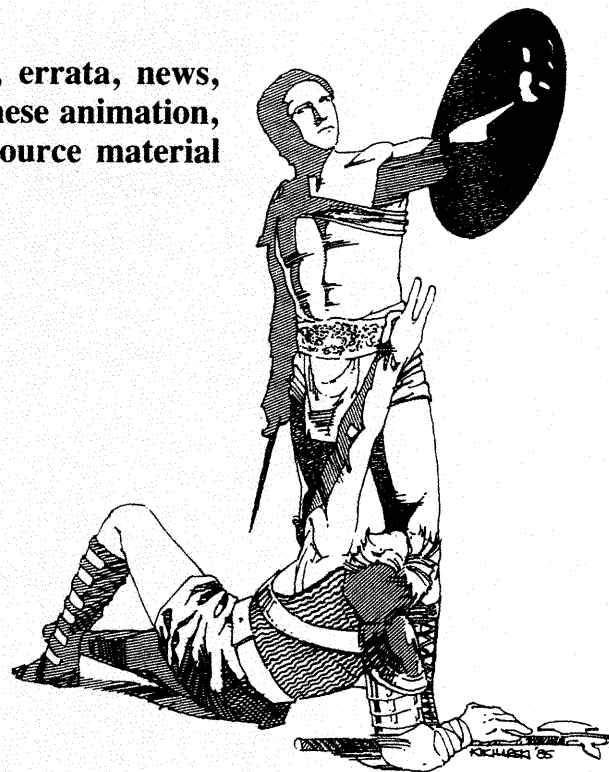
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Players can be any one of the 13 races, including Wolfen, Ogre, Troll, Kobold, Goblin, Changeling, Elf, Human and others.

A complete fantasy world is mapped and outlined. Its vast races, monsters, exotic creatures, weapons, history, introductory adventure and fabulous art work creates a truly beguiling world of fantasy and magic.

### Highlights Include . . .

- 13 different playing races, including Wolfen and Changeling.
- 19 occupational character classes.
- Quick, playable combat system.
- Men of arms with real punch.
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- Dragons, devils, demons, faerie folk and more!!!
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### The Palladium RPG Book II: The Old Ones

Book II plunges players into a world of magic and danger which ultimately leads to a battle for the salvation of all human life against the minions of the demonic Old One. *Adventures* of varying length lead players through wilderness, towns and dungeons. Furthermore, the entire *Timiro Kingdom* is layed before your fingertips. Each city, town, and fort is mapped and described, with notes on its rulers, villains, merchants, and attitudes.

Rule additions include campaign notes and tips, the illusionist and monk as optional character classes, and encounter tables.

### Highlights Include . . .

- 34 Towns and Cities, 21 Forts
- 56 Maps
- \$14.95 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling.

# DRAGONMIRTH

by Bob Muleady



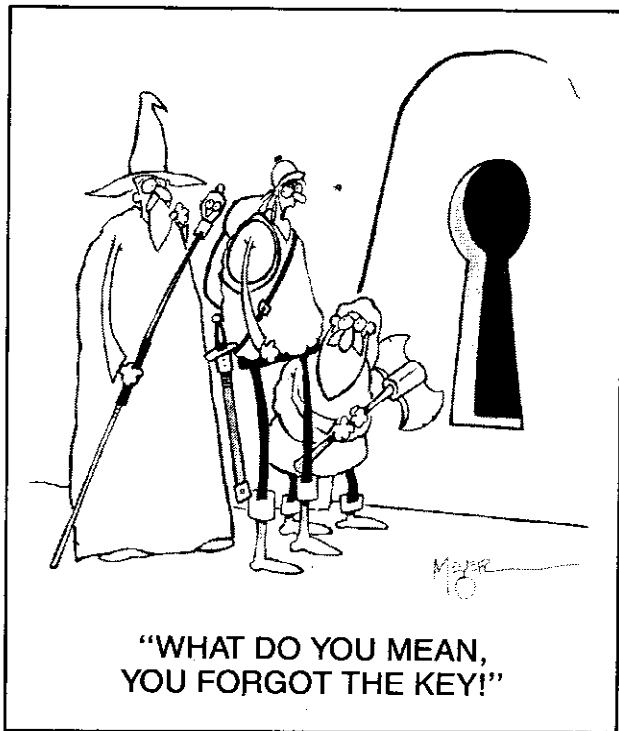
by Mark Doney



"IT STARTED INNOCENTLY ENOUGH  
WITH A LIZARD HERE, A SALAMANDER THERE . . ."



"... MOST ADVENTURERS HATE GREEN SLIME,  
BUT JORD PREFERRED THE TASTE OVER  
GRAY OOZE."

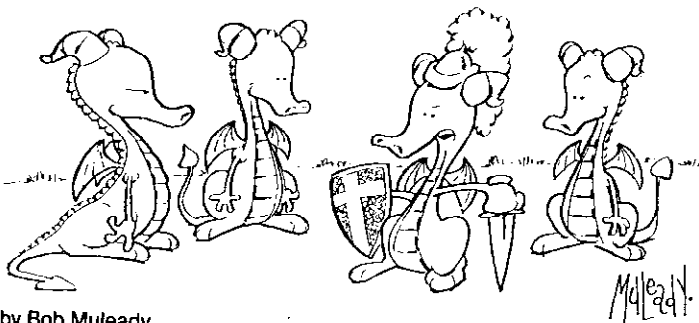


by Dwain Meyer

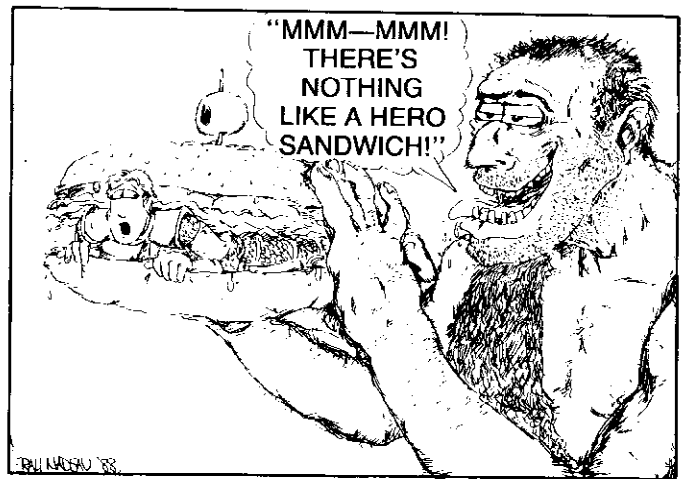


by Wait Hackensmith Jr.

"AWW, I WAS ST. GEORGE LAST TIME.  
WHY DO YOU ALWAYS GET  
TO BE THE GOOD GUYS?"



by Bob Muleady



by Ray Nadeau

**YAMARA**



by Barbera Ward and Chris Adams

OH@\*! LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!!

WHY?

WHEN GEELAH FINDS OUT DAT WE LOST DA RACE, LOST DA OL' 'ZOOMER AND LOST ALL HER MONEY, SHE WILL KILL US!!

YOU IS RIGHT, LET'S SPLIT!

WELL, AT LEAST OUR HOTEL ROOM IS PAID UP IN ADVANCE, WE CAN—

HOLD IT! WE CAN'T GO DERE, DAT'S DA FIRST PLACE SHE WOULD LOOK!

GAAA... YOU ARE RIGHT!

HEEAAH!

LATER, THE TWO SNEAK THEIR WAY ACROSS TOWN

DO YA (HUFF-PUFF) SEE HER (WHEEZ) ANYPLACE?

NOPE. MAN, I'LL TELL YA ONE THING, DAT LI'L GEELAH CAN BE JUST DOWN RIGHT MEAN SOMETIMES...

...YEP, SHE CAN BE A BIG PAIN IN DA BUTT... YA GOT TO DO EVERYTHING HER WAY OR IT'S WRONG... MAN, IF SHE GIVES ME ANY LIP ABOUT DAT RACE, I'LL JUS' PUT MY FOOT DOWN, IT'S ABOUT TIME DAT I SHOWED HER WHO IS DA BOSS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP...

SSHHH

GULP

DA SHIP! DA DOCKING FEE IS PAID IN ADVANCE, WE CAN HIDE OUT DERE 'TIL SNARF GETS BACK!

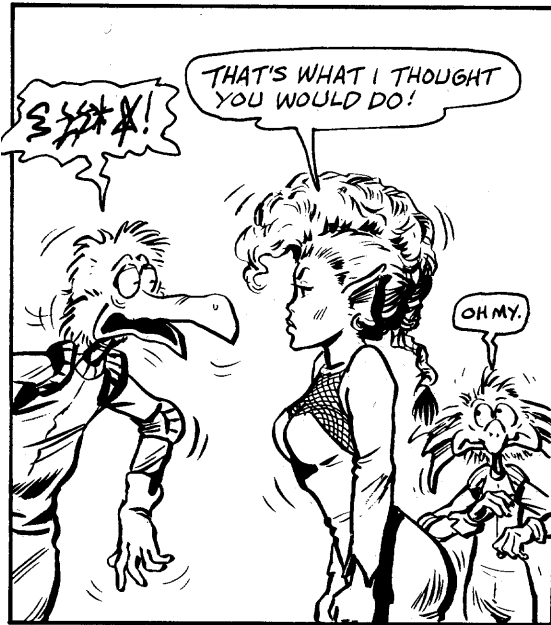
GOOD IDEA!

I'LL TELL YA ANOTHER THING, SHE MAY THINK DAT OL' B.B. BIRD HAS BEEN TOUGH BEFORE, WELL, SHE AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET. IF I SEE DAT LI'L SHARP EARED SO'N' SO, I'LL JUST... JUST...

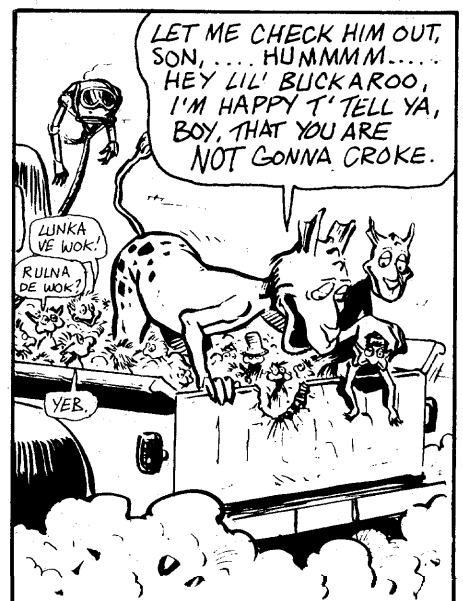
PSSTBZZT PZZZT.

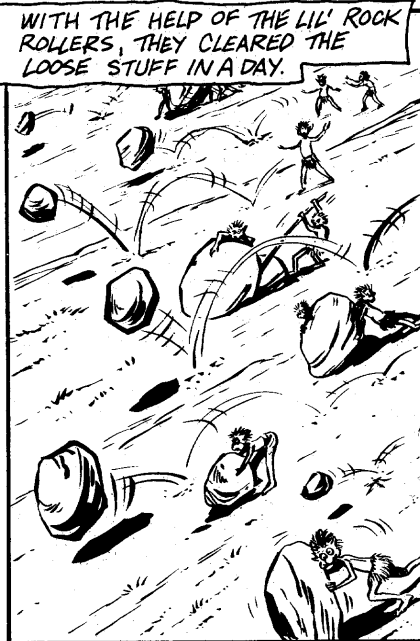
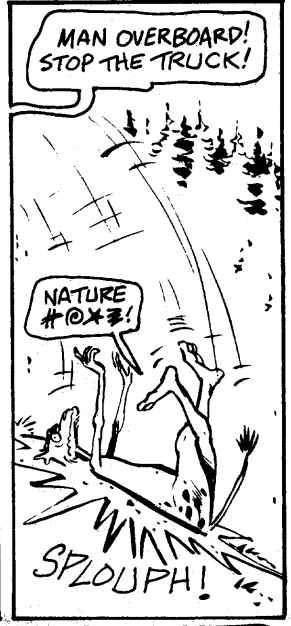
EH... AH... JUS' WHAT WILL YOU DO TO... HER... (GULP)...

WELL, I'LL TELL YA WHAT I'LL DO... I'LL LOOK HER RIGHT IN DA EYE AND...



A FEW YEARS AGO, IN MY OWN TIME, AND AGE, WHICH IS NOW ... I ACCIDENTALLY INTERCEPTED A MESSAGE FROM A ROBOT THAT HAD GONE INTO THE FUTURE. THE MESSAGE STATED THAT A HUGE GOLD STRIKE WOULD BE FOUND IN THESE VERY MOUNTAINS AND IT GAVE THE EXACT LOCATION...





Just read **some** of what  
Partha has in store for you.

01-047 Armored Centaur	3.00
01-050 Wyvern	4.00
01-051 Griffin	2.50
01-052 Hill Giant	4.50

They ride the moor  
of desolation, across  
barren war-torn fields,  
right into your game  
and it's never going  
to be the same.

01-156 ▶  
The Black Prince's  
Black Knight

# RAL PARTHA ENT.

01-057 Frost Giant	4.50
01-059 Fire Giant	3.50
01-060 Dungeon Lady, with pet dragon	1.25
01-066 Necromancers (3)	3.50
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01-093 Anti-Paladin, mounted and on foot	4.50
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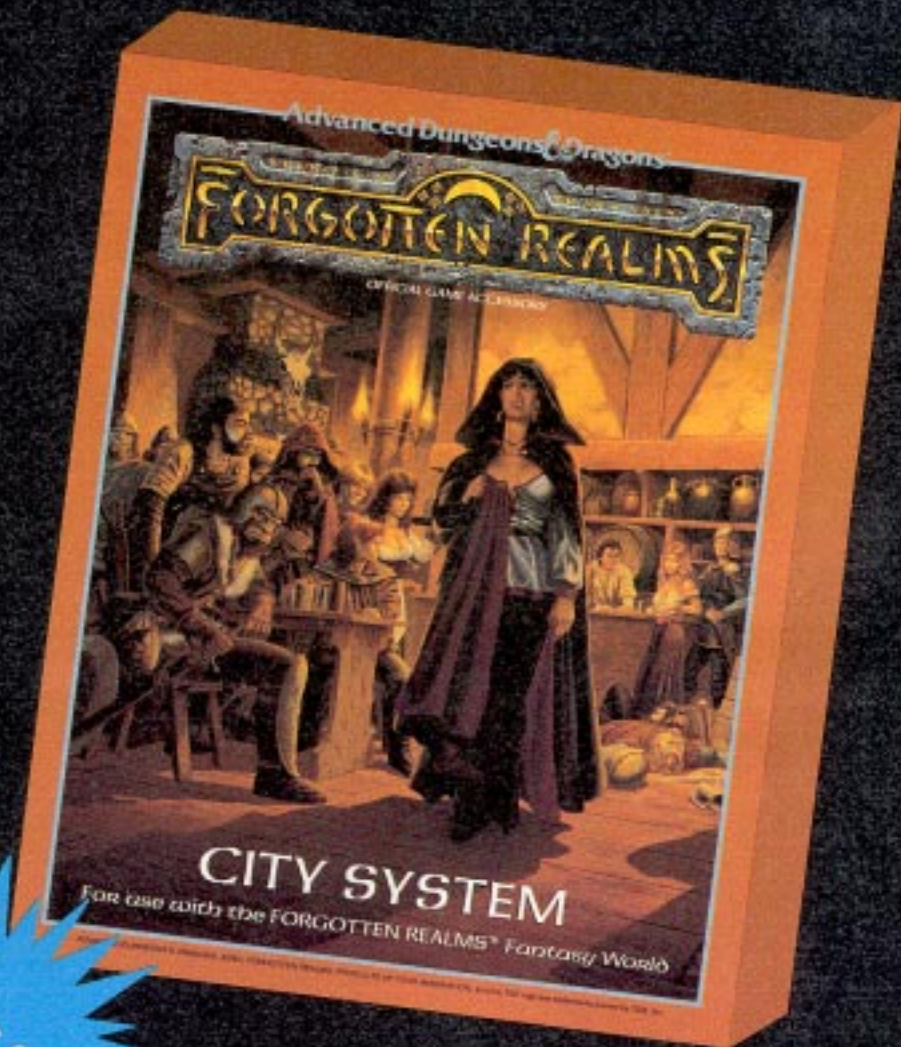
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